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JULY 1950

# COMMENTARY

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# COMMENTARY

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## IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES OF

# COMMENTARY

**The Lessons of Peekskill** *James Rorty; Winifred Raushenbush*

When rioting and violence broke out in the small Hudson Valley town of Peekskill in the wake of a Paul Robeson concert, many liberals saw fascism reborn in America. After careful investigation on the scene, the authors present the real story of what happened in Peekskill, and what we may learn from it.

**Arab-Jewish Amity Must Still Be Built** *Ernst Simon*

Israel's political and military triumphs of the past two years have tended to obscure the fact that the new state has still to establish friendly relations with the Arab world, both inside and outside of Israel. Dr. Simon, who is of the late Judah Magnes's *"Ihud"* ("Unity") group, candidly reviews the previous program of the group in the light of events that invalidated some of its precepts, but sees the key slogan—the need for Arab-Jewish amity—no less important than ever.

**Einstein: The Passion of Pure Reason** *Irving Kristol*

Just as Einstein's physical theories have baffled the layman, so his religious views have often scandalized scientists and his political opinions have often bewildered both expert and layman alike. Yet, according to Mr. Kristol, Einstein's beliefs are not confused and haphazard, but flower from the single root of his extraordinary mind.

**The Chanukah "Problem"** *Grace Goldin*

In a feverish effort to compete with Christmas, American Jews have placed more and more emphasis on the Chanukah holiday, and yet the "problem" remains: should Jewish parents keep their children apart from the "universal" celebration of Christmas? Mrs. Goldin, from her own experiences in a small mid-Western town, evokes the tangled atmosphere that surrounds this present Jewish dilemma.

**Lox and Bagel** *Jacob Weinstein*

A discourse on the dialectical relationship of the two leading elements in a new but by now established Jewish tradition.

**The Hebrew-Christian Evangelists** *Harry L. Golden*

Throughout the South, Jewish converts to Christianity are "spreading the gospel" and seeking converts from among the "stiff-necked" of their own people. An analysis of the character of this movement and its meaning for Jewish-Christian relations in the South.

**Community at the Golden Gate** *Earl Raab*

A profile of San Francisco's Jewish community—one of the oldest, most distinguished, and—at the moment—perhaps least understood communities in America. In the department "From the American Scene."

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# COMMENTARY

## NATIONALISM: ENEMY OR ALLY?

### *Can Democracy Afford the Internationalist Fetish?*

### RICHARD H. S. CROSSMAN

ONE of the queerest phenomena of the 20th century has been the cult in America and Britain of "internationalism." Despite the teaching of Woodrow Wilson, who rightly saw that national self-determination is a precondition of political and economic liberty, we have come to associate progress with the formation of supra-national unions and to treat nationalism as a sentiment unworthy of the progressive mind, or even as an enemy of democracy. The young men of the Oxford Union who, on a famous occasion in 1932, refused to fight "for King and Country," would have been ready to die for the League of Nations, and some of them did die fighting in Spain with the International Brigade. But at that time they felt that a war fought to defend the nationhood of Great Britain would be a futile—possibly even an unjust—war.

IT USED to be the hope of men of good will that our epoch would see the end of nationalism, and that some form of world union would replace traditional sovereignties. Instead, as RICHARD H. S. CROSSMAN here points out, none of the current supra-national ideologies, whether democratic or totalitarian, has been able to supplant nationalism, which seems almost everywhere resurgent. But should we view this development as necessarily retrograde, and nationalism as always and inevitably reactionary? On the contrary, Mr. Crossman suggests, national revival may well prove—at least in some crucial instances—an ally of democracy and a valuable counterforce to the march of Communism. Mr. Crossman is a Labor member of Parliament and an editor of the *New Statesman and Nation*. He is the author of the widely read book *Palestine Mission*, and of a volume on the political philosophy of Plato. His most recent article in COMMENTARY was "Did FDR Escape Wilson's Failure?" in the November 1949 issue.

Such sentiments are not nearly so strong today—at least in Britain. Now that our own independence is gravely endangered by economic and strategic weakness, we are beginning to realize that national self-determination is the most priceless possession of a free people. Our associations with other nations—whether in Western Europe, in the Commonwealth, or across the Atlantic—are undertaken with the object not of transcending nationalism, but of creating conditions in which the British nation can survive. When ECA experts tell us that we must federate with Western Europe or take the consequences, our instinctive reply runs as follows: "We are not prepared to sacrifice our basic freedom for the sake of an economic theory, or even as the price of dollar aid. We would rather starve on our island than be forced into the prison of an artificial super-state. Alliance? Yes. Military integration? Yes. Internationalization of public utilities, such as transport and power? Yes. But each step must be designed not to abolish nationhood but to defend it. Nations are not industrial concerns, which can be amalgamated at will in order to increase their efficiency and profitability. They are living organisms out of which individual freedom grows. Destroy the nation, and you destroy freedom itself."

I do not wish to suggest that nationalism is not frequently a reactionary force, and an obstacle in the way of human progress. Certainly it can take obnoxious forms, as, for instance, in the persons of Hitler or Stalin, Sir Oswald Mosley or Senator McCarthy. Often enough, it may well become a drag upon progress, and hysterically achieve a curtailment of human freedom. The other day, for instance, the Economic Commission for Europe published a report on steel production, which showed clearly enough that the sum total of all the national steel production plans of all the European countries, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, will almost certainly result in a European surplus of eight million tons by 1953, which can only bring the threat of unemployment, price-cutting, and ruthless competition to all the nations concerned. If each of us seeks to be self-sufficient in steel, all of us will be bankrupt. Or again, consider the problem of the so-called "hard core" of the displaced persons: two hundred thousand victims of German nationalism, nearly five years after the defeat of Hitler, are still languishing in camps in Germany. And why? Because no country to which they want to go is ready to receive them. This is a second example of the reactionary effect of nationalism, a xenophobia caused by the fear on the part of the trade union movements and the professional associations in each country that an influx of cheap immigrant labor will undermine their own standard of life.

But it is wrong to conclude from the excesses of nationalism that it is always and everywhere reactionary. In fact, nationalism is a necessary and creative concomitant of real popular liberty. A state ruled by a small capitalist or Stalinist oligarchy, or by an aristocratic elite, can always be more internationalist, more one-world minded, than a state where the masses really have their say. The more the common people take over from traditional ruling elites the decisions which affect their lives, the more divided and varied will the pattern of human life in the world become. Nationalism, in fact, is an essential stage in the self-assertion and emancipation of man. In its modern form it really began when the Protestant countries, including Britain, revolted against the world order of the Middle Ages. Henry VIII was the ancestor of Marshal Tito. Its second wave came when the American revolutionaries revolted against Britain, and the ideas of the French Revolution overthrew the divine right of monarchs. In its third wave, nationalism came as the Russian revolution against Western capitalist domination, and in its fourth wave, the wave which is now undermining the foundations of both the Eastern and the Western blocs, it is the self-assertion of the millions in Asia and Africa against white ascendancy, whether that white man be a Russian commissar, a British proconsul, or an American oil magnate.

Nationalism, when it is healthy and democratic, is never purely nationalist. Every national, democratic revolution is also a social revolution, a struggle of the underprivileged inside each nation against exploitation by the elite. Seeking security and status, the underprivileged reorganize the economy of the state in a struggle to achieve full employment, fair shares, and equality of opportunity. But in so doing they tend to transform their nationalism into isolationism. The Left is internationalist and fired with the ideal of the brotherhood of man so long as it is in opposition. The testing time comes when it achieves power. Then, far too often, it uses that power not merely to destroy privilege within the nation, but to maintain or establish a privileged position for the nation over against the community of nations. And just because the Left is democratic and expresses the fears of the masses, who know little of other countries, it finds it especially hard to sacrifice national interests for the sake of an international society. The American worker, fighting for his Fair Deal, wants to use the taxes he pays for improving the conditions of the Americans, and not for loans to other nations; the British worker, determined to maintain full employment, suspects any plans for European union which would give the foreigner free right of entry to his country; and the Russian Communist, who long ago, when he was in illegal opposition, planned for an international order, has become more suspicious of the foreigner, more fearful of contact with him, than the most reactionary landowner or capitalist. The danger of the national democratic revolution, which always begins as an emancipating, liberating force, is that it will finish up in the dead end of chauvinist self-sufficiency.

When we look at the present world conflict against this background, we realize that nationalism is the ally and the enemy of both contestants. Russian Communism, for instance, has now entered a phase of Napoleonic nationalism. But the more the Kremlin seeks to integrate Russia's allies into a larger Russian-controlled economic and political unit, the greater the tension inside the Communist world. The more, under the pressure of the cold war, it tightens its grip on the satellite Communist parties, the more the nationalist dynamic, on which Communism relied in its revolutionary phase, is turned against Russia itself. That is the lesson of Titoism. Tito is the national Communist who wants his Communism to be for Yugoslavia, and though his military power may be small, he is relying on an elemental force which in the long run is more powerful than the Red Army. Hence the paradoxical position that Communism is no longer an integrating force inside the Eastern bloc. Where the Red Army has never been in occupation—in the Far East, for instance, and in Africa—it still has the power to disintegrate an empire or an effete order. But it is fast losing its power to unify a new Communist world—except by brute force.

This failure is all the more remarkable because Russian Communism originally had an enormous opportunity. It appealed not only to the proletarian class within each state but to the proletarian nations; and it could offer them a revolutionary short cut to emancipation and modernization which was not available to the Western democracies. If the Kremlin could have given Tito "dominion status," if it could have treated Poland and Bulgaria as Britain treated Canada and South Africa, conceding to their demands of sovereignty and retaining leadership by sacrificing power, the Russians might have created a world Communist society. They will fail to do so, and they will end in disintegrating their own empire, because their Marxist philosophy prevents them from realizing the historic fact that, when matched against each other, nationalism nearly always defeats class war.

The great strength of the Western democracies is that they are not blind to this fact. Indeed, they all accept national self-determination as the foundation of their freedom. This is why America is still fundamentally isolationist, undertaking reluctantly, and without ideological conviction, her vast overseas responsibilities. It is because Americans really do not want to dominate other nations or impose a philosophy on them that the Atlantic Pact is a less unstable unit than the Eastern bloc. It is because Britain understood the force of nationalism and voluntarily abdicated from empire that India, Pakistan, and Ceylon—the only bulwarks of Western civilization in the Far East—have remained within the Commonwealth.

The conclusion is clear. Our resistance to Communism will be successful wherever we have nationalism as our ally. Some Americans had hoped that Marshall Plan aid would lead to a European super-state, transcending national sovereignty. In fact, it has achieved precisely the opposite. It has enabled the nations of Western Europe to reconstruct their national economies. Quite literally, Western Europe has been "re-stored" on the 1939 pattern, and this means that the immediate postwar danger that it would be absorbed into the Russian bloc has been averted.

Even in Western Europe, however, Communism remains a powerful force wherever it can combine an attack on social injustice with an appeal to national sentiment. Here the contrast between France and Western Germany is immensely significant. Economic conditions in Western Germany, with nine million refugees and two million unemployed, are a good deal worse than those in France. Yet, whereas the French Communist party is immensely powerful, in Western Germany Communism has been reduced to trivial proportions. The difference is due to the fact that German Communism represents the acceptance of the Oder-Neisse line, of the Polish claim to Breslau and the Russian claim to Koenigsberg. As such, it is unpatriotic. In France, on the other hand, the Communists, who denounce the Americanization of French culture and harp on the American intention to re-arm the Germans in collusion with the men of Vichy, can still claim to be a party of National Resistance. Where we have been able to make a really nationalist appeal—in Greece, Finland, and Austria—the Communists have been routed. But they have retained their strength in Italy because Togliatti has combined an attack on flagrant social injustice with an appeal to national independence.

Does this argument imply that we shall have to exploit the spirit of nationalism in order to make Germany and France tough allies in the cold war? Are General de Gaulle and some neo-Nazi German leader to become the twin defenders of Western European culture against Communism? These are legitimate questions. Nationalism—particularly when it is combined with anti-Communist hysteria—degenerates only too easily into fascism, particularly in a country like Germany, which has no stable democratic tradition. But this obvious danger should not make us dismiss any and every revival of German national feeling as a revival of Hitlerism. The good German democrat must resent the partition of his country and the rape of Breslau and Koenigsberg. To desire a unified Germany is not a sign of original sin, but a healthy symptom of German recovery, provided that the Germans who desire it renounce war and totalitarianism as the instruments for achieving their ends. The Weimar democracy collapsed partly because the German democratic parties allowed themselves to be the passive executants of the Versailles Treaty. As a result, the Nazis and nationalists were able to identify democracy with treason and patriotism with totalitarianism. If he is to fight the revival of fascism, the German democrat today must uphold the principles of the Atlantic Charter as they apply to Germans, and must claim that in any Western union the Germans must be treated as equal partners. We may not—indeed, we should not—be willing to grant this claim so far as regards defense, but to abuse the Germans for making it, is simply to play into the hands of the Kremlin. The Schuman plan is the best thing which has happened to us since Mr. Marshall's Harvard speech, because it shows that the French have at last realized that the Germans can only become good Europeans if their neighbors are prepared, in the interests of enlightened nationalism, to make the same surrender of sovereignty which they seek to impose on the Germans.

It is, I believe, the abject failure of our appeal to nationalism which explains our defeats in the Far East. Here Communism not only caters to empty bellies, but is a popular movement against Western imperialism. Among the colored peoples, racial inequality is at least as effective a breeding ground for Communism as poverty and disease, since it provides the intelligentsia and the more idealistic section of the ruling class with a motive for siding with social revolution. Indeed, it is only where the educated classes are ready to lead the workers and peasants that Communism becomes really dangerous. What differentiates the position in Western Europe from that in Asia is the fact that, in the former case, for national reasons, the educated classes are mainly anti-Communist, whereas in Asia nationalism drives them to school with Marx and Lenin. A young professor of economics in Peking may possibly calculate that American dollars would do more to solve the social problem than a Chinese Communist regime. But this rational calculation is pushed aside by his patriotic hatred of Western imperialism. American aid is received as an insult by any nation which has not already fought and won its own war of national independence against its own George III. And even those nations whose nationhood has been secure for centuries will resent assistance if it is accompanied by demands for any form of union which seems to threaten their sovereignty. As democrats, we are all isolationists at heart.

But this does not mean that we can afford to wallow in our isolationism. A stable world cannot consist of selfish nations, each planning its economy in reckless disregard of the others, and extorting all it can in every economic negotiation. Just as Russia may well destroy its empire by the imposition of a ruthless discipline in defiance of nationalism, so the Western democracies may well destroy their freedom by permitting it to degenerate into anarchy. When Wendell Willkie wrote *One World,* he was right in one respect: in order to maintain our national self-determination, we must accept a unified economic order in which the richer nations systematically assist the poorer and backward peoples. If the American worker is to make the Fair Deal for which he strives a stable Fair Deal, he must help to organize a world Fair Deal. If the British worker wants his British socialism to be permanent, he must help to organize a world of full employment and fair shares, in which the colored peoples take a full and equal part.

LET me sum up my conclusions.

1. The great lesson of the last three years is that the only idea strong enough to compete with Russian Communism is that of a strong, popular nationalism. We can see it working for us on the other side of the Iron Curtain in tiny Finland, in the Russian Zone of Austria, and, above all, in Yugoslavia. We can see it working against us in the Far East.

2. Any suggestion that the United States intends to use the big stick in order to wind up the untidy mess of European nation-states and to replace it by a neat, efficient, federal super-state plays into the hands of the Kremlin. Sandwiched between two hostile non-European powers, most European nations today would like to be neutral if they could. Since this is impossible, they look westward, and not eastward, because they believe that assistance from America does not involve accepting a foreign way of life, or submitting to political and economic integration ordained from outside.

3. Primarily, Europeans detest Communism not because it is communistic, but because it has become a weapon of Russian imperialism. We resent Communist parties less for the doctrines they preach than because they take their orders from a foreign power. American foreign policy has tacitly recognized this in its handling of Yugoslavia. Instead of "containing" Communism here, it is seeking to split Communism by helping Tito's national Communism to defend itself against Russian Communism.

4. If the cold war is to be won, it is vital that this major amendment of the Truman doctrine should be made an explicit principle of Anglo-American policy. Our declared aim should be not to contain Communism, but to contain Russian imperialism. We are opposed to Communism in our own countries; but we accept the right of other nations, with quite different social problems, to establish Communist regimes, provided those regimes are genuinely independent and respect the rights of other nations to their own forms of government.

5. Outside Europe—immediately in the Far East and, later on, in the Middle East and Africa—it is probable that revolutionary dictatorships will be established as a transitional stage to modern national democracy. Our aim must not be to stop this social and

national revolution, but to prevent it from falling under Russian domination. We must remember our own infancy as nations and the excesses of our own revolutions. We cannot, without violating the whole idea of democracy, seek to impose free enterprise on collectivist countries, or parliamentary institutions on peoples who lack the centuries of development which our specialized form of Western democracy requires. The colonial and colored peoples must be given the freedom to make all their own mistakes, and they must be convinced by the Western world that we respect their demand for national self-determination, even if it takes social revolutionary forms.

The mental readjustment required for such a redefinition of our foreign policy is, of course, enormous. Anti-Communism is an ideology almost as vulgar and easy to swallow as Communism itself. Moreover, just like Communism, it provides a rationale for the aggressiveness and contempt for human rights which is instinctive in both dominant nations and dominant power groups. It is always tempting, when you have the power to do so, to force others to be free according to your own definition of freedom, instead of tolerating the growth of freedom through its adolescent phase of social and nationalistic violence. Yet, as British history teaches us, a great power which yields to this temptation is guilty of imperialism, however much it may persuade itself that its intentions are purely defensive.

I am convinced that the world-wide spread of the idea of nationalism is already sufficiently strong to prevent world empire by a single power, or even by an agreement between great powers. The strength of a great power today resides in its industrial potential, in the number of divisions at its disposal, and in its stockpile of atom bombs. But in the long run this mere physical strength avails nothing against the obstinate resistance of national democracy, the protest of the peoples against an imposed uniformity, whether Communist or anti-Communist. Our supreme job in the cold war is to insure that this democratic demand for nationhood and social justice can be fully satisfied inside the Western world.

# THE SPARTAN YOUTH OF ISRAEL

## *A Generation Searches for Its Soul*

### J. L. TELLER

THE presence and predominance of Israel's youth – in a swaggering, wholly physical sense – in the streets of Tel Aviv, in the settlements, and in army and government offices, which are sometimes uncannily like Boys' Towns, is overpowering. It sweeps in on the newcomer to the land with the suddenness of a breaker, and it has burdened Israelis, even on the friskier side of forty, with a mounting sense of insecurity, manifest in their approbatory head-nods and sheepish grins over even the most fatuous and outrageous impudence of the young. These grins are an implicit comment on the general explanation: "After all, these young won the war for us," an explanation to be heard everywhere with the dull frequency of an alibi. In this self-effacing remark by the no-longer-so-young, there is commingled an implied apology for having aged at all, a genuine pride in the native-born *sabra,* a trace of uncertainty, and a readiness to disclaim responsibility for this new type of Jew they helped to shape.

In Israel, the middle-aged and older walk somewhat furtively in the shadow of youth, like conquered populations in the shadow of a benevolent occupation force; even in their sleep, the fatigued elders are haunted by the uneasiness of the dispossessed, waking past midnight to the boisterous loud talk and irrepressible group-singing of gangs of youth returning from a rally.

But though the sabra may seem, at first, self-assertive and cocky, his manner is a deceptive veneer, and he is as insecure in his way as his parents in theirs. His own publications indicate that he is confused; craving affection, he receives adulation, and instead of love he reads worry and doubt in his parents' eyes.

THE sabra population is not monolithic, and in a society in flux, like Israel, it is difficult to generalize. It will take many decades before we can hope to know the new kind of Jew shaped by Israel. Yet, even though the sabra we describe today is a transitory type, it is probable that time will at most modify the picture rather than efface it in favor of an entirely new one.

The sabra girl is dark- or chestnut-haired, of medium build and of ample proportions, a wilful, pugnacious creature, in the tradition of the East European *eyshet chayil* who was both breadwinner and housekeeper, both father and mother to her brood. The Israeli young male is Slavic in the cast of his features, though the large-scale Oriental immigration may yet change his physical appearance. In the set of shoulders and chin, and the swing of the arms on parade, the sabra, especially of a socialist *kibbutz,* is photogenically the twin of the Soviet and Yugoslav labor-brigade youth. The sabra has been raised in a society that has made arbitrary demands on its youth—recruiting them

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ISRAEL is proud of her youth, and with justice: it was the youth who were the pioneers and warriors of the new state. Also—though we in America hear less of this—Israel is worried about her youth, and, according to J. L. TELLER, with reason. There is a mounting feeling that the heroic virtues have had their hour and what is needed is more adolescent curiosity and fewer adolescent certainties. Mr. Teller addresses himself here to presenting the facts of the situation as he has seen them, and, is able to report, along with some disturbing omens, certain happier evidence that Israel's young men and women, beneath their cloak of cocky self-assurance, are beginning to question themselves as well as many aspects of the world they have made. Mr. Teller writes for the Israeli press, and his articles have appeared in the *Nation, Commonweal, American Mercury,* and other periodicals. Born in Poland in 1912, he came to this country in 1921.

into the underground movements, compelling them to spend time in the agricultural service, calling them up for the army. He differs from his Slav counterparts, however, in the degree that his environment differs from theirs—Israel is a cauldron of political parties, and of innumerable racial, cultural, and ethnic strains, to which new ingredients are continually added.

The typical Israeli youth, possessing most of the attributes associated with the pageantry of the "new Jew," is an alumnus of the labor youth movement with its ritualistic hikes and outdoor life, accustomed to rise and retire to a bugle's call, indefatigably participating in his *chevra* (group), eating and sleeping with them, his daily routine as concentric as a *hora* dance, and he is even coaxed into pouring his innermost thoughts into group discussions led by a youth leader adept at directing the streamlets of youthful doubts into a safe dialectical bay. If he has been raised and has always lived in a collective settlement, he has little experience or knowledge of private life. His parents are to him merely members of his settlement with whom he is on more intimate terms than with others; even if he is a city youth, he has spent little time with his parents, brothers, and sisters. Indeed, he has had little contact with people older than himself because he has always been with his *chevra*. Consequently, his capacities for introspection or the expression of personal feeling have been either arrested or deliberately repressed—entrusted, like a sexual dream, only to his diary.

Some of these diaries were published after their authors died in the Arab-Israeli war. "I am sad," a diarist guiltily records. "Why do I feel revulsion for my comrades who have dropped fully dressed on their cots and are snoring away?" "Our young had an inner world, they had depth," write the adult editors of these diaries, disturbed, even shocked, and yet patently proud that the young were not so simple, so bereft of complications, as they had conspired to make them. S. Yizhar, sabra-novelist, instructor and farmer, lithe, tanned, with a feminine mouth and a pugilist's nose, a shock of dark hair ostentatiously dangling from his forehead, told me that the sabra's primary deficiency, accounting for his superficiality, has been his ignorance of tragedy. The war has changed that.

RAISED in a boy scout environment, by boy scout standards, the sabra was sheltered and, until recently, unprepared for any life but that of Israel's unique rural labor society. Dr. X., a pupil of Freud, who several years ago joined a kibbutz in order to qualify himself to deal with its psychological problems, expressed to me the concern he felt when sabras who had served with the Jewish units in World War II returned home. In the kibbutz and youth movements they had been taught the virtue of male and female celibacy as a qualification for eventual marital union. "Overseas, some of our boys digressed," he said. "However, on returning home, they happily reverted to the standards of our environment. We encourage them to marry young and to seek their mates in kibbutzim not necessarily [!] organizationally or politically aligned to theirs." Psychoanalytic theory in the kibbutzim is obviously rather different from the Viennese variety!

Y., a warm-hearted Ukrainian pioneer of Ben Gurion's generation, the Prime Minister's onetime comrade in swamp-draining, who has still retained much of his pristine faith, is a veteran youth leader, a "minor prophet" of the youth movement. He spoke admiringly of the conduct of his "children" when they were trained, in pre-statehood days, for the Haganah cadres. "Boys and girls camping, sometimes even tenting together, for weeks on end," he said, "yet not a single untoward incident. The boys and girls of my own generation, sons and daughters of Orthodox parents, were by no means licentious, and yet I wonder whether we, under similar conditions, would have deported ourselves as well."

We sat in the garden café of the Hotel Yarden in Tel Aviv, where my wife and I were staying. Boys and girls swirled to jazz music under bulbs suspended from wire fastened to an awning. Y. frowned. "Tell me," he asked, "are these sabras?" He was puzzled and hurt. "The young sabra," he explained, "treated the sabra female as he would his own sister. This new influx of women, some brazen wenches among them, might change his attitude."

I brought this up in my conversation with the above-mentioned Dr. X., and the good doctor, complacently loyal to the ideas and ideals of kibbutz life, shrugged it off. He did concede, in reply to a question, that there was ground for concern on another score. There had been no room for vanity or self-glorification, let alone self-gain, in the boy scout utopia in which the sabra was raised, guided, and chided by such self-taught East European intellectuals as the late Berl Katzenelson. This Labor Zionist ideologist, editor of *Davar,* was a disarming man of somewhat studied simplicity, with a flair for pseudo-philosophic revery compounded, among other elements, of strains of Tolstoyism and Hasidism, who walked the land like a peripatetic sage and was a comrade to the young. Characteristically, the labor youth leaders' training center named for him is called Bet Berl, not Bet Katzenelson. Service to the group as the individual's noblest and ultimate aim, as the highest path to self-realization, was the doctrine of men of his generation, and in this they instructed the young.

But statehood and war have inevitably upset this perfect virginal design. To produce the indispensable formal discipline, and to induce maximal effort from each citizen-soldier, the state established ranks in the army and published awards for bravery; medals and promotions replaced the reward implicit in a private awareness of one's service to group and cause, public recognition superseded the anonymity which required no tribute, and the government-encouraged competitive spirit shattered the security which the sabra had been taught to derive from his participation in group accomplishment.

"I have observed with gratification that the morale of kibbutz youth is not lastingly impaired," Dr. X. said. "War heroes return to their villages and settle back almost with relief into kibbutz routine."

I asked whether this was also true of city youth, previously cowed and disciplined by the mere example of the kibbutz sabra. He did not know. I also asked whether it was not probable that in returning to the kibbutz the young warrior is only fleeing realities which he mastered in an emergency but is afraid to face under normal circumstances. The doctor shrugged. "Speculation," he said. "My concern is only with paralyzing fears, not with those that provide stimulus for heroic deeds. The kibbutz itself is a skeletal structure of heroic proportions."

I pressed him further: Will not the disparity between the standards of the youth movement by which he had been raised, and the competitive spirit he has found outside, permanently haunt the kibbutz youth repatriated from the wars? Has not his faith in the morality by which he grew up been impaired by his knowledge that personal inducements, which he had been taught to disparage as base, contribute to victory? "But he had found that other, the new morality, wanting," Dr. X. replied with confidence.

Yet, despite the optimism of Dr. X., some of the young, unprepared for that other morality of whose existence they had only known theoretically, have become bitter.

PAST midnight, on Allenby Street in Tel Aviv, a uniformed youngster approached me and asked to be directed to a hotel. My room had two beds, my wife was away in Jerusalem, so I offered to set him up as my guest at the comfortable and, by kibbutz standards, luxurious Yarden Hotel. "Rubbish," said the young man. "I appreciate your kindness, but such hotels are not for me." I asked whether he was a veteran of Palmach. "You guessed correctly," he grinned.

The resentment which former members of the spartan Palmach, recruited largely from labor settlement youth, harbor against the government for dissolving their formations in the Israeli army, must not be oversimplified. It is more than the resentment of members of a banned fraternity. It is fanned, true enough, for political reasons, by Palmach's godfathers, the elders who lead the left socialist Mapam. But its true roots are in the disillusionment of these young votaries with the state's ready compromise with standards they had been taught to regard as decadent. After all, had they not cut their teeth on a doctrine of implacability?

A former associate of Ben Gurion, still prominent in his party, tried to explain this to me: "My son was discharged from the army with the rank of a colonel, and he is only twenty-two. When he talks, I stuff my ears, for I am pained by the truth of what he says! 'I volunteered without the least hesitation, so did my friends. In the meantime, the slackers who have remained behind horseshoed their posteriors into comfortable chairs in the various ministries. I had hoped that they would at least feel embarrassed and avert their eyes, knowing that they had plotted their careers when their comrades bled. Brazenly they meet my eyes as though they had waited for this opportunity to stare down my indictment and to convey their contempt for the fool who knew no better than to be a sacrificial lamb. I'll call them to account some day.' That's my son talking, and he is not untypical."

Of course, this is common talk to the veterans of all armies, everywhere. Rebellion and resentment is normal in other youth—but rebel words from the sabra have an ominous ring because he has been trained to conform. His predecessors, for many generations, had been rebels, engaged in the combat between Hasidim and Mitnagdim, and in the conflict between the ghetto generation and its emancipation-craving sons. Jewish youths defied their elders in order to enlist in the revolutionary movements in Eastern and Central Europe, and to serve the Zionist cause.

It was not so in Israel. The rebel generations of Zionist pioneers aborted the seeds of their sons' rebellion; like Moses who slew the Midianite, the early pioneers deliberately buried the past in the sand, so that the young would set out without memories, without associations, and, by some intuitive process, would bridge the void and establish continuity with a mythical ancient Hebrew man. The sabra was brought up in the collective nursery of a communal settlement, under the objective care of an impersonal nurse (the Israeli psychologist now has to treat the attachment to the nurse and the mothers' concomitant jealousy), or under the guidance of a youth leader, in a conspiracy designed to cut off the sabra from the exile-inflicted "neuroses" of his predecessors, although this is now of course vehemently denied. Under this deliberate conditioning, the sabra was deprived of youth's inalienable right to rebel against the past, and of the sanctuary which the past can provide for the battle-fatigued young. By stressing that the Diaspora Jew was spiritually afflicted, his parents taught the sabra to treat them with condescension.

Such margin for rebellion as exists is only for minutiae. Because his Russian-born parents were verbose, the sabra is taciturn, and even this requires qualification: abandoning their native tongues to acquire Hebrew, which after several decades they still speak haltingly and inadequately, the elders have permanently impaired their own capacity for articulation, almost as if in unconscious imitation of the earliest repatriator, Moses, who stammered. Like the children of deaf-mutes, the sabras have been conditioned to inarticulation. Conditioned to all kinds of slang, raised as I was on New York's East Side, I have found the drabness and sterility of the sabra's slang disconcerting in the offspring of a traditionally eloquent people. With very few exceptions, this inability to express themselves verbally is true even of sabra writers.

WHERE does the sabra turn when he seeks comfort? He does not turn to religion, which he has not been taught, nor can he turn to secular knowledge, for he has been equipped with aptitudes and little else. Zvi Kimchayi, an alumnus of a Hebrew high school, complained in a letter published in *Hador,* daily organ of Mapai, that in reviewing his high school years he notes that "although I have been adequately instructed in mathematics, physics, and chemistry, the instruction I have received in humanities was decidedly inadequate." He was taught the Bible "most superficially," and was never taught the elaborate history of the periods covered by Biblical chronology. Jewish history, as taught to him at high school, began with Ezra and Nehemiah's return to Zion. He was next taught the history of Rome; his instruction concluded with the Middle Ages, only to resume again with the history of Hasidism and the French Revolution, "a smattering of the former, and the latter a collection of dry, meager facts culled from an American textbook." Instruction in literature was restricted to memorizing Bialik's "The Desert Dead," and to a superficial, hasty, pre-examination review of Bialik's place in Hebrew literature. A forkful of Zionist history concluded his education. "No wonder this scanty diet has so little effect. I have no wish to spit in the well I have drawn from; I deem it my duty, however, to bring these facts to the attention of parents who erroneously believe that our schools produce an intelligentsia."

The curriculum, undeniably faulty, is a symptom but not the cause, which lies rather in the unique hierarchical structure of Israeli society, where the political personality, for reasons inseparable from the process which helped bring the state into being, enjoys unchallenged primacy. And the political personality's anointed own, the youth leader trained by a party, has replaced the authority of the teacher—even though he too is a party member—who is relegated to the secondary task of providing the instruments of literacy, while the youth's soul is guarded by doctrinaire scoutmasters.

The moral and aesthetic literacy, such as it is, which the scoutmaster has acquired, is a sad mixture of stale cultural fragments. It was the writers and thinkers of the Russia of 1905 who most influenced the pioneer generation of men like Ben Gurion; the trends and fashions of 1917, and of the postwar Europe of the early 1920's, were clumsily grafted on to the 1905 tradition. Their backbreaking tasks prevented the pioneers from keeping step with subsequent cultural and intellectual developments. The result is a cultural limbo, and youth is the victim. It is significant that writers and thinkers are almost totally absent from the Israeli youth's pantheon, except for three personalities—the late Berl Katzenelson, the fervid nationalist poet Uri Zvi Gruenberg, and the Stern Gang's late poet-chieftain, Israel Stern—all three, men of passionate politics. Some of the new Israeli writers are popular among the youth, but are by no means "influences."

THE most influential youth organizations in Israel, not necessarily in the order of their numerical strength or importance, are: Hanoar Haoved, maintained by Histadrut, the Israeli Federation of Labor, and, like the parent body, imperiled though not yet disrupted by the struggle between Mapai and Mapam; the separate youth movements of Mapai and Mapam; B'nai Akiba of the Hapoel Hamizrachi (religious labor); and Revisionism's Betar.

Perhaps because he has been subjected to vigorous, and various, indoctrination, the sabra has not yet developed a unique and individual political doctrine. The fact is, the soldiers' vote in Israel's parliamentary elections indicated that the sabra does not appreciably deviate from the community's political norm. This was decidedly a letdown for the two major opposition parties, the Revisionist Herut and leftist Mapam, which had counted on army ballots to improve their electoral showing. None of the parties can claim the sabra's support.

The sabra uses the term "Zionist" in mockery, and Israel's political parties are still Zionist in orientation and even in structure: their roots have been world Jewry, not the territory of Israel, they are still the Israeli branches of world-wide movements, and their platforms are loaded down by the ballast of "Zionist" thinking which derived from the needs, frequently regional, of Jewish communities outside Palestine.

Mapai, the leading party, is a striking example. In its dawn, in Eastern Europe, it presented a monolithic program to the young Jew, opposing universalism to the discipline of ghetto orthodoxy, and nationalism to assimilation. It preached its doctrine of "productive labor" to young Jews precariously perched on the fringes of the economic middle class. It called for the "ingathering of the exiles." Whatever remains of this program that is still vital has largely been claimed by all parties, or has become the state's responsibility. Mapai's overwhelming endorsement at the polls was not due to the party's ideology, but was a recognition of the party's performance in office—like the New Deal's, largely pragmatic, partly expedient.

Instructed that excessive cerebration is a ghetto malady, the sabra has not much stomach for Mapam's abstruse Marxian dialectics. The middle class "rugged individualism" advocated by Herut cannot hold much attraction for sabra youth, conditioned by and to group action. Orthodox youth is enrolled not with Mizrachi and Agudah, but with their labor affiliates, and may at some future date form a religious bloc within a labor-cooperative party.

The doctrines of their parties served the sabra's parents as a substitute for their religious faith, and they leaned upon the party for the services which are normally provided by the state. Now that the state has come into being, dependence on the party for hospitalization, education, employment, old age pensions, will be transferred to the state, which will provide these services to all its citizens, regardless of how they vote. Thus the political party has lost its aura of divinity and another signpost by which his parents have walked in this land is disappearing before the sabra's eyes.

Where should he turn?

THE sabra might, and passionately does, return to the kibbutz, a form of society that his parents, its architects, regard as ethically superior to any they have known. He finds no stability even there; the kibbutz, also, is still a society in flux, readjusting itself to new realities in a desperate effort to insure its permanence. It is still closer to a summer camp than to a spiritual sanctuary, although its life is at times as grim as in a coal mine. The sabra turns to it because he knows no other home, and is compelled by moral obligation, although he is agonized by its cultural nudity. Some of this agony has been conveyed to the readers of *Ashmoret,* the candid, ably edited publication of Mapai's younger generation. One of its issues last summer featured a letter from a girl, trained in the rural labor youth movement from childhood, although unaffiliated to a kibbutz. The caption read: "I Do Not Believe In God, Yet—"

She had been brought up, she wrote, in a typical Israeli non-religious home. However, once a year, on Yom Kippur, her parents deviate from the non-religious pattern by attending synagogue and fasting all day. As she grew older and aware of this contradiction, an up-welling of resentment was the result. "I used to ask myself, as my parents went off to synagogue on Yom Kippur: am I Jewishly deficient? Often I have wanted to tell them: why do you fast and go to *shul?* I have been deprived by you of religion, and you provided me with no substitute; show me an alternative! I dare not confide my thoughts to my cocky friends, to whom all is self-evident and simple, and certainly not to the kibbutz youngsters to whom Yom Kippur is 'hurray—another day of no work and no school.' . . . It happened to me about a half year ago, in the thick of war, when I was billeted in one of the sacred towns, and overcome by one of those awful spells when love for homeland seems insipid and war makes no sense. . . . Driven by some inexplicable compulsion, I sauntered guiltily, stealthily into a synagogue. . . . Suddenly I was overwhelmed by the ecstasy of union with a concealed power, with the entire Jewish people. . . . That experience has since given me no rest. . . . What magic do the synagogue walls contain? I can hardly wait for the next Yom Kippur."

In Israel, mystified parents told me that their children, Israeli soldiers, crowded into Nazareth churches on the first Christmas eve after the establishment of Israel, and were spellbound by the ritual.

The girl's letter in *Ashmoret* set off a storm of polemics, and later issues I have received still carry correspondence on the subject. Tovah Zimmerman chided the editors for giving space to "a letter so laughable and uneducational. Why seek in a synagogue evidence of one's Jewishness? And the young who slaked the soil with their blood, were they not Jews? My friend, do not waste time. Join the youth movement."

And "A Comrade from Tel Aviv" advised: "Find your soul in the great task of building a Jewish, socialist state, in ethical conduct."

The girl who started off this stream of polemics replied: "I have been, since childhood, with the youth movement and must confess that I am not always happy, and am even sometimes depressed by an inner vacuum, when in the company of my comrades. . . . However, Tovah Zimmerman, you need not fear that I'll turn religious; even those of us, and there may be many such, who would seek solace in religion, will not find it because faith, unfortunately, can neither be willed nor rationalized. . . . And I must confess, 'comrade from Tel Aviv,' that even if I build the Jewish socialist state seventy times over again, I shall still not be redeemed from those other problems I have referred to. . . . You advise me to find gratification, or solace at least, in an ethical way of life. What is ethics? We have learned in the war that only the religious, who believe in literal punishment and reward, abide by the disciplines of ethics."

This soul-searching is universal among Israeli youth. The youth was the instrument by means of which the state was achieved and the war won. Unlike the Golem, that youth now demands a soul. Among the men who lead Israel, perhaps David Ben Gurion alone is painfully sensitive to this need of Israel's youth, yet all he can offer is pseudo-Biblical rhetoric, sublimation via the continuity of the pioneer tradition, and military pageantry.

The search goes on for an Israeli myth. *Aleph*, an irregularly appearing periodical published by young people, has been laboring at a perverse myth. An article captioned "We [meaning Israelis] and They [meaning Jews]," urges youth "to break out from the emotional and philosophical framework provided by the Jewish immigrants to Israel. . . . Jewry is a socio-historical entity possessed of great vitality . . . [but] it has never been identified with any single country or any single nation. . . . The Jewish community is a tribal community, supra-territorial, supra-lingual, supra-national. . . . The Jews who migrate to Israel maintain their bonds with their brethren overseas, cultural, but largely tribal-biological bonds. . . . Members of the dispersed Jewish community, under great pressure in some parts of the world, are forced to emigrate. . . . Primarily for reasons of social homogeneity, no country is prepared to take these immigrants in, and for equally well-known reasons, Israel like her neighbors in the Near East requires increase of population. . . . We, Israelis, assist the Jews to solve one of their major problems, by taking in their immigrants, and the global Jewish community helps us solve this problem for the Jews by providing financial resources. . . . Thus Jews and Israelis have corresponding, but certainly not common, interests. . . . "

All without exception that I have talked to in Israel, including Peter Bergson–Hillel Kook, whose concept of Hebrew nation seems closest to this group's philosophy (although he is vehemently attacked in the columns of *Aleph*), have assured me that the periodical is published by an obscure handful of literary dilettantes, parent-pampered youths, of no significance on the Israeli scene. This is undoubtedly true. Nonetheless, they are the perverse offspring of that segment of Zionist doctrine which viewed the two thousand years of Jewish Diaspora as a brutal farce and its human products as social freaks.

The creation of a myth in closer harmony with the Jewish past is laboriously attempted in *Sulam* ("The Ladder"), published by a group of religious-minded dissidents from the Stern Group, who disapprove of the leftist doctrine, akin to Mapam's, now advocated by their chieftain of terrorist days, Nathan Friedman-Yellin.

All issues of *Sulam* that have come to my attention have carried quotations from the late Chief Rabbi Kook, probably the greatest religious leader in Jewry since Israel Baal Shem Tov. One of these quotations reads: "We shall not return to Kant, but to the Red Sea, to Sinai, to Jerusalem, to Abraham, to Rabbi Akiba, and to Rabbi Simon ben Yohai—our beloved who are our life." Another quotation from Rabbi Kook reads: "Our rational sense is only a discipline that explains somewhat the light of life stored in our rich and sacred imagination, which exists in a superior reality. . . . " An article in *Sulam* calls on Israel's philologists "to extirpate from our language the synonymity of 'thought' and 'head' and restore the ancient Hebrew phrase 'wisdom of the heart.'" The author argues that "the heart is the dynamo that drives the blood stream," and that Jews must begin "to think with their blood, which is meant to give birth to Jewish thought and not be poured out in pogroms." One must appreciate the addiction to pseudo-Biblical, pseudo-Cabalistic rhetoric of the contributors to this magazine, one of the best-written in Israel, not to be too shocked by the seeming affinity between this "thinking with the blood" and the concept of *Blut und Ehre* which typified a sanguinary era in recent European history.

This search for new meanings testifies to the apparent failure of several decades of pioneers to create a "eugenic Jew" in Israel. Soul-wrestling, an ancient Jewish affliction, is beginning to claim its toll among the Israeli young; in labor ranks, the doctrinaire is, perforce, being replaced by the pragmatic, and the pragmatic might—who knows?—lead to a new faith. All religious faiths that have survived and retained their vigor have possessed the gift of pragmatism.

A striking example is Hapoel Hamizrachi, the religious labor movement with its scores of kibbutzim throughout the land. It feels no compulsion to engage in the creation of a myth, because it confidently claims its place in the frame of Jewish historical continuity. The unobtainable goals of moral perfection set by religious faith preclude the frustration attendant on the attainment of a less perfect goal.

During a memorial service one evening in a sprawling synagogal structure on Hayarkon Street, in the vicinity of Tel Aviv's night clubs, fashionable hotels, and sidewalk cafés, I met a remarkable adolescent, a heretic in his own way, but still too steeped in extreme Orthodoxy to accept even Hapoel Hamizrachi. He was a lad of no more than fifteen, with side-curls, a wide-rimmed velvet hat, a short gray jacket, velvet knee pants, and long white stockings. In his unique precocious fashion he explained to me his attitude to the state.

"For them," he pointed to a labor youth brigade that had just then marched by, "the Messiah has already come. I, on the other hand, however much I cherish the state, do not confound it with redemption. The heathen on Christmas night gets drunk on alcohol; believing that his Messiah has already come, he cannot get drunk on anticipation. These parades, this swagger, are Israeli youth's form of alcoholic beverages. When they realize, as they must, that the Messiah is anticipation, that he is eternal non-realization, they will become true Jews."

It may be charged that what I write is more revealing of its author than of its subject. It is probably equally revealing of both, as is indeed everything written these days about Israel. Thus, for example, many American Jewish writers have returned from Israel indiscriminately enthusiastic about its youth. The less affirmative such writers' past identification with Jewry, the greater their enthusiasm, and I suspect its source is in the hopeful and erroneous impression that the young Israeli has been released from his "Jewishness." I have been annoyed by these reports. I am happy to deny them. Large segments of Israeli youth are already reaching out, beyond the accoutrements of statehood that so fascinate and impress the tourist, for that "superior reality," in the words of Rabbi Kook, which the Jew has always sought.

# HITLER AND THE IDEA OF GREATNESS

## *Force Is Our Only Measure*

### SIMONE WEIL

A METHOD of education does not amount to much if it is not inspired by an idea of human perfection. Insofar as it concerns the education of a people, this idea ought to be shared by an entire civilization. One need not seek this idea in the past, which contains only the imperfect. Still less should one look for it in our dreams of the future, which are necessarily as mediocre as ourselves, and, moreover, much inferior to those of the past. One must seek the inspiring idea for education, as for the method itself, among the eternal truths inscribed in the nature of things.

There are, above all, four obstacles which separate us from a form of civilization that might be worth something: our false idea of historical greatness; the degradation of the sense of justice; our idolatry of money; and the absence in us of a religious inspiration. It is possible to use the first person plural without hesitation, for it is to be doubted that at the present moment there is a single human being on the surface of the globe who escapes this quadruple defect, and it is still more to be doubted that there is a single one among the white race. But if there are a few—as we must hope, despite everything—they are hidden.

Our conception of greatness is the most serious of these defects and the one we are least conscious of as a flaw. At least, as a flaw in us. It shocks us in our enemies, but, despite the warning contained in Christ's utterance about the mote and the beam, it never occurs to us to recognize it as being ours. For our conception of greatness is the same as that which inspired Hitler throughout his life. When we denounce it without the slightest reflection on our own conduct, the angels must weep or laugh—if there are angels who take an interest in our propaganda. . . .

The conquered—but only the temporarily conquered—often benefit from a sentimentality which at times is unwarranted. Misfortune has tremendous glamor only when it is the misfortune of the strong. The misfortune of the weak is not even an object of attention; unless, however, it is an object of repulsion. When the Christians acquired the strong conviction that the Christ, though crucified, was then resurrected and was shortly to return in glory to reward his followers and punish all others, they were no longer frightened by torture. But earlier, when the Christ was only an absolutely pure human being, he was abandoned as soon as misfortune touched him. Those who loved him

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THERE are certain reputations which seem to be in need of the seal of death in order to flourish. SIMONE WEIL is a case in point. When she died in 1943, at the age of thirty-four, she was known in her native land, France, as a somewhat eccentric writer on matters political, literary, and religious. In the United States, she has been known until recently primarily by a translation of her essay "The Iliad: Poem of Force," in which she was revealed as a sensitive, eloquent, and uncompromising moralist. Since her death, her writings and her personality have attracted an increasing interest, until she is regarded at the moment as perhaps the most significant religious thinker to have been produced by France in the past two decades. In an article to be published in a future issue of COMMENTARY, Leslie A. Fiedler will provide a full-scale portrait of the life and thought of this ardent mystic who was born into a Jewish family and lectured from the doorsteps of—the Catholic Church. The essay printed here indicates some of the main aspects of Simone Weil's thought: her detestation of force, her radical morality, her burning pen. It is excerpted from a posthumous work, *L'Enracinement,* published in Paris by Gallimard. It is translated from the French by Bernard Frechtman.

most could not find in their hearts the strength to run risks for him. Torture prevails over courage unless the man who is tortured is sustained by the possibility of revenge. Revenge need not be personal; a martyrized Jesuit in China is sustained by the temporal greatness of the Church, despite the fact that he can expect no help from it.

Here below there is no other power than physical force. This might serve as an axiom. As for the power that is not of the here-below, contact with it cannot be bought at a lesser price than that of experiencing a kind of death.

Here below there is no other power than physical force, and it is force that moves the feelings, including pity. One might cite any number of examples. Why did pacifists after 1918 feel more kindly toward Germany than toward Austria? Why did the necessity for vacations with pay seem to so many people as obvious as a geometric axiom in 1930 and not in 1935? Why are there so many more people interested in factory workers than in farm workers? And so on.

The same is true for history. We admire the heroic resistance of the conquered when the course of time brings them a certain revenge; not otherwise. We have no pity for things totally destroyed. Who feels any pity for Jericho, for Gaza, Tyre, Sidon, Carthage, Numantia, Greek Sicily, or pre-Columbian Peru? But, it may be argued, how are we to weep over the disappearance of things about which we know practically nothing? And we know nothing about them because they have disappeared.

Generally speaking, the gravest errors, those which falsify all thinking, which corrupt the soul, which put it beyond good and evil, are due to the fact that certain things escape our attention. If they escape our attention, how can we give them our attention, however hard we try? So it is that the conquered escape attention. History is the battleground of a Darwinian process even more pitiless than that which governs animal and vegetable life. The conquered disappear. They are naught.

The Romans are said to have civilized Gaul. It had no art before Gallo-Roman art; it had no thought before the Gauls had the privilege of reading the philosophical writings of Cicero! And so on. We know practically nothing about Gaul, but the almost negligible indications that we do have prove sufficiently that this is all a lie.

Gallic art is not likely to be the subject of treatises by our archaeologists because its material was perishable wood. But the city of Bourges was such a marvel of beauty that the Gauls lost their last campaign because they did not have the heart to destroy it themselves. Caesar, of course, destroyed it, and massacred all of its forty thousand inhabitants. We also know from Caesar that the studies of the Druids lasted twenty years and consisted in learning by heart poems dealing with the divinity and the universe. Thus, Gallic poetry did contain, at any rate, a quantity of religious and metaphysical poems of a kind to be the subject of twenty years' study. Compared to the incredible richness suggested by this indication alone, Latin poetry, despite Lucretius, is pitifully meager.

Diogenes Laertius says that a tradition attributed Greek wisdom to several foreign origins, among which were the Druids of Gaul. Other texts indicate that Druid thought was related to that of the Pythagoreans. Hence, there was in this people a sea of sacred poetry that disappeared when the Druids were completely exterminated by the Romans for the crime of patriotism.

It is true that the Romans put an end to the human sacrifices which, they said, were practiced in Gaul. We know nothing about what they were, about the manner and spirit in which they were practiced, whether it was a way of executing criminals or of putting to death innocent people, and in the latter case, whether it was with their consent or not. The testimony of the Romans is very vague and cannot be admitted without caution. But we do know with certainty that the Romans themselves instituted the practice, in Gaul and everywhere else, putting to death thousands of innocent people, not to honor the gods but to amuse the crowds. This was the Roman institution par excellence—they whom we dare regard as civilizers.

We have here simply a typical example. Despite the fact that Gaul was succeeded on the same soil by our nation, France; despite the fact that patriotism has a strong tendency among us, as elsewhere, to extend back to the past; despite the fact that the few documents that have been preserved constitute an unimpeachable testimony, the defeat of the armies of Gaul is an insurmountable obstacle to our recognizing the high spiritual quality of this destroyed civilization.

All the same, attempts have been made in this direction, such as that by the historian Camille Jullian. The city of Troy, however, has had no such good fortune. Before June 1940 one could read in the French press, for purposes of patriotic encouragement, articles comparing the Franco-German conflict to the Trojan War; it was explained that this was a struggle of civilization against barbarism, the barbarians being the Trojans. The fact is that there is not the slightest basis for this error, except the defeat of Troy. Because the territory of Troy has never since been the seat of a nation, who anywhere has taken the trouble to note the truth that is so glaringly evident in the Iliad, in Herodotus, and in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*? The truth is, that Troy's level of civilization, culture, and spirituality was very superior to that of the people who unjustly attacked and destroyed it, and that its disappearance has been a disaster in the history of mankind.

If one cannot help falling into this error in the case of the Greeks, who were haunted by remorse for their crime against the Trojans and themselves testified in favor of the victims, how much more so is this true in regard to other nations, whose invariable practice is to slander those they have killed?

HISTORY is based on documents. A historian forbids himself, as a matter of professional practice, to indulge in hypotheses which have no foundation. On the face of it, this is very reasonable; but is it really so reasonable? For, since there are gaps in the documents, a balanced thoughtfulness requires that the mind work with hypotheses having no foundation, though always being aware that these hypotheses are unfounded, and that there may be several possible ones for each point. All the more reason, then, for reading between the lines in the documents, for transporting oneself totally, with an utter forgetfulness of self, into the events that are evoked, for letting one's attention dwell at great length on the little meaningful things, thereby discerning their full significance.

But respect for the document, and the professional spirit of the historian, do not predispose the mind to this sort of exercise. The so-called historical mind does not pierce the paper to find flesh and blood; it subordinates thought to the document. Now, by the nature of things, the documents emanate from the victors. Thus, the study of history becomes nothing but a compilation of statements made by the murderers regarding their victims and themselves.

Regarding the Romans, we have absolutely nothing but the writings of the Romans themselves and of their Greek slaves. The latter have said enough in their servile reticences—if one took the trouble to read them with real attention. But why should anyone take the trouble? There is no motive for making such an effort. It's not the Carthaginians who give out the prizes of the French Academy or chairs at the Sorbonne. Similarly, why should anyone go to the trouble of casting doubt on the information given by the Hebrews regarding the peoples of Canaan whom they exterminated or enslaved? It's not the people of Jericho who make nominations to the Catholic Institute.

We learn from one of the biographies of Hitler that one of the books that had the deepest influence on his youth was a tenth-rate work on the Roman general Sulla. What difference does it make that it was a tenth-rate work? It reflected the attitude of those who are known as the cultural elite.

Who would write about Sulla with contempt? If Hitler desired the kind of greatness which he saw glorified in this book and everywhere else, there was no error on his part. This was the kind of greatness he achieved, the very kind before which we humbly bow as soon as we turn our eyes toward the past. True, we confine ourselves to a humble submissiveness before this greatness; we have not, like Hitler, tried to grab it in our hands. But therein he is better than we. If we recognize something as a good, then we ought to want to seize it. Abstaining is cowardice.

Imagine this miserable, uprooted adolescent wandering about the streets of Vienna, hungry for greatness. He had every right to be hungry for greatness. Whose fault was it if he was aware of no other kind of greatness than crime? Since the populace has known how to read and no longer has oral traditions, it is the people who know how to handle a pen who furnish the public with conceptions and illustrations of historical greatness. The author of this mediocre book on Sulla, as well as all those who, by writing about Sulla or about Rome, had made possible the atmosphere in which this book was written, and, more generally, all those who, having authority to handle word or pen, contributed to the intellectual atmosphere in which the adolescent Hitler grew up—all these are perhaps more guilty than Hitler of the crimes he committed.

We speak of punishing Hitler. But he cannot be punished. He wanted only one thing, and he got it; he wanted to go down in history. Whether he is killed, or tortured, or locked up, or humiliated, history will always be there to protect his soul from any assault of suffering and death. Whatever is inflicted upon him will inevitably be historic death, historic suffering. Just as for the man who has attained the perfect love of God, any event is a good since it emanates from God, so for this idolater of history, everything that comes from history is good. Even here he has far and away the advantage; for the pure love of God dwells in the center of the soul; it leaves the sensibility exposed to blows; it does not constitute an armor. Idolatry is an armor; it prevents suffering from entering the soul. Whatever is inflicted upon Hitler will not prevent, in twenty, fifty, a hundred, or two hundred years, a dreamy and lonely little boy, whether German or not, from thinking that Hitler was an awe-inspiring person and had an utterly awe-inspiring destiny, nor will it prevent him from hoping with all his soul for a similar destiny.

The only punishment capable of hurting Hitler and, in the centuries to come, of preventing little boys who thirst for greatness from following his example, is so total a transformation of the meaning of greatness that Hitler is barred from it.

It is chimerical to believe—and this is because of the blindness of national hatreds—that Hitler can be barred from greatness without such a total transformation. And in order to contribute to this transformation, one must have achieved it within oneself. Everyone can, at this very moment, begin the castigation of Hitler within his own soul by modifying his sense of what it means to be great. This is far from easy, for it is resisted by a social pressure as heavy and enveloping as that of the atmosphere. In order to achieve it one must exclude oneself spiritually from society. That is why Plato said that the capacity for perceiving the good exists only in predestined souls that have received a direct education from God.

It makes no sense to try to determine just how far Hitler and Napoleon resemble and differ from each other. The only problem that has any interest is to know whether one of them can be legitimately barred from greatness without the other's being barred as well; whether their claims to admiration are analogous or essentially different. And if, after having stated the question clearly and looking at it squarely for a long time, one allows oneself to slip into the lie, one is lost.

Marcus Aurelius said of Alexander and Caesar that if they were not just, nothing forced him to imitate them. Likewise, nothing forces us to admire them.

Nothing forces us to, except the sovereign influence of force.

CAN one admire without loving? And if admiration is a kind of love, how dare we love anything other than the good?

It would be simple to make a pact with oneself to admire in history only the actions and lives through which there radiates the spirit of truth, justice, and love; and, on a far lower level, those within which can be detected, through what they have achieved, a real presentiment of this spirit. This excludes, for example, Saint Louis himself, because of his unfortunate advice to his friends to plunge their swords into the belly of anyone who uttered in their presence words tainted with heresy or unbelief.

It will no doubt be said in his defense that this was the spirit of his time, which, since it was seven hundred years before ours, was correspondingly unenlightened. This is a lie. Shortly before Saint Louis, the Catholics of Béziers, far from plunging their swords into the bellies of the heretics of their city, all died rather than deliver them up. The Church has forgotten to rank them as martyrs, a rank it grants to Inquisitors. Nor, in the course of the last three centuries, have the lovers of tolerance, enlightenment, and secularity commemorated this event; so heroic a form of the virtue they feebly call tolerance would have been embarrassing to them.

But even if it were true that the cruelty of fanaticism did dominate all minds in the Middle Ages, the only conclusion to draw would be that there is nothing to admire or love in that age. But that would still not put Saint Louis a fraction of an inch closer to the good. The spirit of truth, justice, and love has nothing to do with a date; it is eternal; an act of cruelty in the 10th century is exactly as cruel, neither more nor less, as an act of cruelty in the 11th.

We would feel this irresistibly if we loved, as if they were ourselves, all the unfortunates who two or three thousand years ago suffered from the cruelty of their fellow men. One would be unable to write, as does one distinguished historian, that slavery had become mild in imperial Rome because of the fact that it rarely involved a more drastic punishment than being beaten with rods.

THE modern superstition of progress is a by-product of the lie by which Christianity was made the official Roman religion. It is bound up with the destruction of the spiritual treasures of the countries conquered by Rome, with the concealing of the perfect continuity between these treasures and Christianity, with a historical conception of the Redemption that makes it a temporal and not an eternal process. The thought of progress was later secularized; it is now the poison of our age. The dogma of progress dishonors the good by making it a matter of fashion.

It is only because the historical mind consists in taking the murderer's word for things, that this dogma seems to correspond so well with the facts. When horror manages momentarily to break through the thick insensitivity of a reader of Livy, he says to himself, "Those were the mores of the time." But one feels from the evidence in the works of the Greek historians that the brutality of the Romans horrified and paralyzed their contemporaries exactly as that of the Germans does today.

If I am not mistaken, among all the facts concerning the Romans that are to be found in ancient history, there is only one example of perfectly pure goodness. Under the triumvirate, during the proscriptions, the consular officials, consuls, and praetors whose names were on the list kissed the knees of their own slaves and begged their help by calling them their masters and saviors. The slaves repulsed them, and rightly so. There were very few exceptions. But a certain Roman, without having had to abase himself, was hidden by his slaves in his own house. Some soldiers, who had seen him going in, began torturing the slaves in order to force them to hand over their master. The slaves suffered without giving way. But the master saw the torture from his hiding place. Unable to bear the sight, he gave himself up to the soldiers and was killed immediately.

If anyone whose heart was in the right place had to choose between several destinies, he would choose indifferently to be either this master or one of those slaves, rather than one of the Scipios, or Caesar, or Cicero, or Augustus, or Virgil, or even one of the Gracchi. There you have an example of something that it is legitimate to admire. Few things in history are perfectly pure. Most of them concern people whose name has disappeared, such as that Roman master, or the inhabitants of Béziers at the beginning of the 13th century. If one were to look for names that evoke purity, one would find few. In Greek history one might name Aristides, Dion, the friend of Plato, and Agis, the little socialist king of Sparta who was killed at the age of twenty. In the history of France would one find any other name than that of Joan of Arc? I doubt it.

But it hardly matters. Is there anything that obliges us to admire a great number of things? The essential thing is to admire only what one can admire with all one's soul. Who can admire Alexander with all his soul, if his soul is not already base?

THERE are people who suggest that the teaching of history be eliminated. That would be disastrous; there is no sense of country without history. Others suggest that wars be given a very minor place in the teaching of history. That would be lying. We feel only too strongly today, and it is equally evident for the past, that nothing is of greater importance to peoples than war. War has to be spoken of as much or even more than we do speak of it; but it should be spoken of in a different way.

There is no other method for an understanding of the human heart than the study of history joined to the experience of life in such a way that they illuminate each other. It is our duty to provide the minds of adolescents and men with this food. But it must be a food of truth. Not only must the facts be exact, insofar as it is within our power to know them, but they must be shown in their true perspective in relation to good and evil.

History is a tissue of baseness and cruelty in which a few threads of purity gleam occasionally. If this be so, the reason is, in the first place, that there is little purity among men; and secondly, that most of this little is, and remains, hidden. We have to seek, if we can, its indirect testimony. In order to love France, one must feel that it has a past, but there is no need to love the historic envelope of this past. One should love its silent, anonymous, vanished part.

It is absolutely false that a providential mechanism transmits to the memory of posterity that which was best in an age. By the nature of things, it is the false greatness that is transmitted. There is indeed a providential mechanism, but it operates only in such a way as to mix a bit of genuine greatness into a great deal of false greatness. It is up to us to detect this bit. Without it we would be lost.

The transmission of false greatness across the centuries is not peculiar to history. It is a general law. For example, it also governs letters and art. There is a certain domination of the centuries by literary talent which corresponds to the domination by political talent in space; they are dominations of the same nature, equally temporal, belonging equally to the realm of matter and force, and equally base. Hence, they can be objects of bargaining and exchange. Ariosto was not ashamed, in the course of a poem, to address his master, the Duke of Este, in somewhat the following terms: I am in your power during my lifetime, and whether I am rich or poor depends on you. But your name is in my power as far as the future is concerned, and whether people speak well or ill of you depends on me. It is to our interest to cooperate. Give me favor and wealth and I will hymn your praise.

Virgil had too much sense of propriety to expose publicly a bargain of this kind. But actually this was exactly the deal that was made between him and Augustus. His lines are often delightful to read, but in spite of this we have to find some other name than poet for him and his kind. Poetry is not for sale. God would be unjust if the Aeneid, having been composed under these conditions, had the same value as the Iliad. But God is just, and the Aeneid is far from attaining this equality.

It is not only in the study of history but in all studies offered to children that good is scorned, and when they grow up they find in the nourishment offered their spirit only further motives for hardening in this scorn.

It is obvious—and this is a truth that has become a commonplace among men and children—that talent has nothing to do with morality. Yet, in all fields, talent is the only thing offered to the admiration of children. In all manifestations of talent, whatever they may be, they see impudently displayed the absence of the virtues they are advised to practice. What conclusion is to be drawn, if not that virtue is characteristic of mediocrity? This conviction has penetrated so deeply that the very word virtue, which was once so charged with meaning, is now ridiculous, as are also the words honesty and kindness. The English are closer to the past than the other countries. Thus, there are no French words that accurately convey the meanings of the English words "good" and "wicked."

Cruelty and ambition are glorified in the history class; egoism, pride, vanity, and a thirst for notoriety are glorified in the literature class; and in the science class all the discoveries that have convulsed human life are extolled without anyone's taking into account either the method of discovery or the effect of the upheaval; how can a child who has been exposed to this learn to admire the good? Anything that tries to go against the current sounds false. In the atmosphere of false greatness it is futile to expect the genuine. False greatness must be scorned.

It is true that there is no connection between talent and morality; this is so because there is no greatness in talent as such. But it is untrue that there is no connection between perfect beauty, perfect truth, and perfect justice; there is more than a connection, there is a mysterious unity, for the good is one.

There is a point of greatness where the genius that creates beauty and the genius that reveals truth, heroism, and sanctity are indistinguishable. As we begin to approach this point, we see the various kinds of greatness tending to merge. We cannot distinguish Giotto's genius as a painter from the Franciscan spirit; nor, in the paintings and poems of the Zen sect in China, can we distinguish the genius of the painter or the poet from the state of mystical illumination; nor, when Velasquez puts kings and beggars on canvas, can we distinguish the genius of the painter from the burning and impartial love that transpierces the depths of the soul. The Iliad, and the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, bear palpable evidence that the poets who created them were in a state of sanctity. From the purely political point of view, regardless of any other, it is infinitely preferable to have composed the *Canticle* of Saint Thomas of Assisi, that jewel of perfect beauty, than the complete works of Victor Hugo. Racine wrote the only work in all of French literature that can approach the great Greek masterpieces when his soul was in a state of conversion. He was far from sanctity when he wrote his other plays; but then we do not find in them that excruciating beauty. A tragedy like *King Lear* is the immediate fruit of the pure spirit of love. Sanctity radiates from the Romanesque churches and the Gregorian chant. Monteverdi, Bach, and Mozart were pure in their lives, as in their works.

If there are geniuses in whom genius is pure to the point of being manifestly close to the greatness that characterizes the most perfect of the saints, why waste one's time admiring others? Why grant one's heart to anything other than the good?

The love of the good will never be kindled in all the hearts of a population, as is necessary for its salvation, so long as we go on thinking that greatness in any sphere is the result of anything other than goodness.

That is why Christ said, "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." Either the inspiration that produces a perfectly beautiful work of art is close to sanctity, or the work is an evil fruit.

If pure good were never capable here below of producing real greatness in art, science, theoretical speculation, and public action, if in all these spheres there were only false greatness, if in all these fields everything was despicable, and thereby blameworthy, there would be no hope for secular life. There would be no possible illumination of this life by the other.

This is not the case, and that is why it is essential to distinguish real greatness from false, and to offer up only the former to love. Real greatness is the good fruit that grows on the good tree, and the good tree is a disposition of the soul that is close to sanctity. The other pretended kinds of greatness should be examined coldly as one examines natural curiosities.

# TWO POEMS

## DAVID IGNATOW

### After the Storm

They lifted their hands out of the muck
into which they had slipped, and carried
their belongings, smeared, into the house.
While they worked their hands would be black,
they knew. They worked as men by day on a job,
with system and regularity. Their homes,
hollowed by storm, had held lights.
Music was heard from instruments
in their grasp, and in the silence
voices had crisscrossed for comfort.
In this interval of mud, arranging peace,
they saw no need to lament their hands,
or to be awed by them.

### Summer

Look at that woman,
unable to get away,
makes a shade of her bed linen
over the fire escape.
Beneath it the children
in open air play toys.
The side bars are for the linen
to hang on, the grilled floor for pillows
the children sit on.
Indoors in a buxom slip
she walks around, busy
picking up things and putting them down.

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A volume of David Ignatow's poetry was recently published by the Decker Press. Mr. Ignatow's poem "Promenade" appeared in the February 1950 Commentary.

# CREATING AN ORGANIC COMMUNITY

## *A Blueprint to Assure American Jewry's Future*

### ROBERT GORDIS

THE problem of the structure and form of the American Jewish community of the future is being widely discussed today from almost every conceivable point of view. The historic events of the last decade have not created the problem; they have simply intensified the long-standing need for a comprehensive philosophy to give direction to the organization of Jewish life in America. It is a task which can no longer be postponed. For two world-shaking events, one, the tragedy in Europe, the other the miracle in Israel, have signalized the end of one epoch in Jewish history and the beginning of another.

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BE IT a sign of imminent disintegration or just healthy growing pains, at no time have critics of the organized Jewish community been more vociferous, and plans and programs for its overhauling more numerous. Concern over Jewish survival in America, desire for greater efficiency in achieving communal tasks, the conviction that this or that cherished institution or Jewish value should be given higher priority or even primacy—all these impulses are at work. And undoubtedly there is operating also the nostalgia that men everywhere seem to feel, as our present-day industrialized society destroys the older, tightly knit human communities. It is not strange that the Jews, the urban people par excellence and yet with memories of what was once the most coherent community in the world, should be especially affected. The problem, at least for America, is: How can we achieve the virtues and values of community while reaping the benefits of the cultural values and the personal freedoms essential to a modern free society? ROBERT GORDIS here presents one point of view which has many ardent and influential spokesmen, primarily—but not entirely—within the movement known as Conservative Judaism. Dr. Gordis is rabbi of the Rockaway Park Hebrew Congregation and professor of Bible at the Jewish Theological Seminary; and he has recently been appointed lecturer in religion at Columbia University. He is the author of several well-known books and numerous articles and is a former president of the Rabbinical Assembly. Among Dr. Gordis's books are: *The Jew Faces a New World* (1941); *The Wisdom of Ecclesiastes* (1945); and *Conservative Judaism: An American Philosophy* (1945).

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The point need not be labored that the existence of the State of Israel does not hinder the five million American Jews from remaining wholehearted in their political allegiance to the United States. Individual Jews, to be sure, may decide to migrate to Palestine and some may accept Israeli citizenship. Young *halutzim* (pioneers) may voluntarily leave the ease and comfort of the United States for a pioneering life in Israel —a possibility that has thrown into panic those whom Lord Melchett once called the Order of Trembling Israelites. But no matter how extensively the movement for *halutziut* grows—and there is need of its expansion—it will affect only a tiny fraction of American Jewry. The one thing all of us—Zionist and non-Zionist—agree on, is that the vast majority of American Jews will remain here so long as democracy retains its vitality among the American people.

There is every reason, then, for American Jews to prepare more thoughtfully for the future. What kind of American Jewish community do we desire, and how shall we plan to achieve it?

AN INTELLIGENT answer to this problem is possible only against the background of Jewish history, each period of which produced its own type of community, with its own marked characteristics.

The first type is the *natural community*, of which ancient Palestine in the First and Second Commonwealths offers the most striking illustration. This community was rooted in its own soil. A Jewish child born in Palestine during these periods could join no other community except the Jewish, unless he chose to dissociate himself by a violent act of apostasy or treachery, as did Josephus. The natural community, too, embraced every area of human experience: to be a

Jew was to be a member of a group which shared in common all aspects of human life —political, cultural, religious, legal, and judicial.

With the exile and the rise of the Diaspora, another type, the *compulsory community,* appears on the stage of Jewish history, taking on varied forms in ancient Babylonia, Christian Spain, and medieval Poland. Jews were made to participate in Jewish community life not of their own volition, but because of the organized pressure of the state in which they lived. It is not to be imagined for a moment that there were not inner sanctions in Jewish life, universally felt and deeply rooted. But irrespective of whether the Jew wished to associate himself with the Jewish community or not, he was compelled to do so by the "host" community. In the medieval state the Jew as an individual had no official existence; he was a cell of the Jewish community. Hence, in levying taxes upon Jews, the government would place an assessment on the community, which in turn would allocate the share of each individual member. The most important consequence was that the Jewish community had the power to enforce taxation on its members. Now the right to tax means the right to govern. By virtue of that function, the Jewish community became an all-inclusive agency for all group needs and activities.

The French Revolution, which ushered in modern Jewish history, stimulated the process of Jewish emancipation—that is to say, the recognition of the individual Jew as a citizen of his native land, rather than as a unit of a foreign community living on sufferance upon an alien soil. The Emancipation, therefore, seemed to sound the death-knell of the compulsory Jewish community. Actually, however, this category never died out completely, but survived, through vestigial remains, in Poland, Yugoslavia, and Italy until World War II. Even in France, the home of the Revolution, the compulsory community – reconstituted as a Consistory and with its functions restricted to religious activities—continued to be recognized by the state.

In Central Europe, too, a compromise was adopted between the pre-Emancipation status of the community and the post-Emancipation recognition of the individual. For all secular concerns, only the individual Jew existed, but for all collective Jewish purposes, religious and cultural, the government recognized the Jewish community as a unit and allocated special taxes for its support. A Jew could escape the obligation of community membership by baptism, or by declaring himself *"konfessionslos."* By special laws adopted in Germany in 1876, a Jew could secede from the Jewish group, by declaring that the particular ritual practiced in his community was not in consonance with his religious convictions. As was soon recognized, this provision served merely as a convenient way of evading community obligations. The implication of this experiment in "liberalism" for the building of Jewish community life in America should not be overlooked.

Thus far, all efforts to establish even minimal religious, ethical, and cultural standards for American Jews, or to require even a slight degree of personal and financial participation in Jewish life as tangible evidence of adherence to the Jewish community, have been stoutly resisted as infractions of the principle of "democracy."

To revert to history, the differences between the two types of community must not obscure their far-reaching similarities.

First, to all intents and purposes, the natural community was compulsory for the average Jew because no other was within reach, and the compulsory community was natural because no other was conceivable.

Second, both the natural and the compulsory community were *organic,* to use a valuable term we owe to the creative insight of the most stimulating thinker that American Jewry has produced, Mordecai M. Kaplan. That is to say that both types of community included all features of Jewish life. What we are accustomed to classify as religious, educational, civic defense, charitable, and administrative activities, were all maintained by all the members of the Jewish community within a single pattern of organization.

Finally, neither type of community was troubled by what might be described as the hallmark of the modern post-French Revolution period—the problem of the status of the Jew and the character of his group life. Nowhere in the Bible or Talmud do we find any discussion as to whether Jews are a religion, a nationality, or a race. Traditional Judaism was an organic unity, expressed in the classic reformulation of the Zohar's statement: "God, Israel, and the Torah are one."

Status, like all other aspects of Judaism, became a problem in response to the social and political compulsives of the modern age, set in motion by the French Revolution and the Emancipation. The Emancipation, to be sure, admitted Jews as individuals to citizenship in their native or adopted countries, holding out to them at least constitutional guarantees of political freedom, civic equality, and economic opportunity. But this was accorded them, not as their human due, their inalienable right, but as an exchange, a *quid pro quo*. In return for these rights, the states of Western Europe demanded the surrender of the group pattern of Jewish life, embodied in the Jewish community and Jewish tradition. As one of the outstanding apostles of Jewish emancipation, Clermont-Tonnerre, put it with disarming frankness: "To the Jews as Jews, nothing; to the Jews as men, everything." The nature of the transaction was clearly understood within the Jewish fold as well, being implicit in the replies of the French Sanhedrin convened by Napoleon in 1807.

The situation may be described in another way—the Emancipation marked a great step forward in the process of human liberation, but as time was to show, it was not the ultimate step. The French Revolution emphasized individualism and laissez faire, and the Emancipation, offspring of the French Revolution, failed to appreciate the significance of the group relations of men. It granted Jews individual rights but not the right of group self-determination, without which, as later events have demonstrated, all other democratic rights become a travesty and a delusion.

THE most obvious way of proving one's right to equality in the modern nationalistic state lay, of course, in total "integration" with the majority group, that is to say, the complete obliteration of one's Jewish identity. This course was enthusiastically embarked upon by thousands of Jews in the 19th century in Germany, France, Italy, and England, either through outright baptism or through intermarriage, and is still a powerful trend in our times. This pressure toward integration was frequently justified intellectually as a consequence of the Enlightenment. Traditional Judaism, it was maintained, was no longer adequate to meet the needs of modern men living in a world based upon the scientific outlook. While revision of Jewish values was indeed called for in certain areas, it is undeniable that the basic compulsion behind the various types of heterodoxy was social rather than purely intellectual, philosophic, or religious. Fundamentally, the challenge facing Judaism was that of a minority community confronted by tempting social, economic, and political rewards which demanded or seemed to demand the obliteration of characteristic Jewish values.

There was, however, a very considerable number of Jews who were unwilling or unable to surrender their Jewish distinctiveness *in toto*. Often they felt a deeply rooted attachment to Jewish ideals or practices, or they were kept within the Jewish fold by a sense of loyalty to family or kinsmen, impulses which they often could not justify on rational grounds, and of which they might even be ashamed. These subtle inner factors were immeasurably strengthened by far-from-subtle external conditions, particularly the rise of modern anti-Semitism.

For these large groups of Jews, two distinct purposes loomed: the preservation of the gains of the Emancipation on the one hand, and the retention of their Jewish identity and some form of Jewish distinctiveness on the other. Hence, the characteristic formula of the post-Emancipation period evolved. Henceforth, Judaism was to be a "religion," a denominational cult, limited to a few articles of belief and a handful of unobtrusive practices, so that *"deutsche Staatsbuerger des juedischen Glaubens"* might be classified by the side of *"deutsche Staatsbuerger des christlichen Glaubens."* By declaring that Jews were no longer a nation, but merely members of a religious sect, early Reform leaders felt they were validating the eligibility of Jews to full-fledged citizenship.

But, actually, the concept of "religion" when applied to Judaism was an alien borrowing. It is no accident that the classic literature of Israel, the Bible and the Talmud, has no word for "religion." Reducing the Jewish group to the dimensions of a religious cult violated the essential character of Judaism and led to its emasculation. Nor did it correspond to the realities of Jewish group life, particularly in Eastern Europe, where the bulk of Jewish population was concentrated before the two World Wars. Worst of all, it failed dismally, even in the West, to halt the triumphant march of anti-Semitism throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Sixteen years after the all but successful attempt of the Nazis to exterminate the Jewish people, the bankruptcy, both in theory and in practice, of the formula is—or should be—clear to all.

Another effort to save "half a loaf" rather than lose all was made through the doctrine of Jewish nationalism, most dynamically, but not exclusively, expressed in Zionism.

It is of course clear that the nationalist formula for Judaism was incomparably closer to the truth than the so-called "religious" interpretation. It could build, without distortion, upon the strong national emphasis of the Jewish tradition of the past, and it reckoned with the fact of Jewish identification in the present. Moreover, in an age when religious loyalties are weak, especially among Jews, it supplied a dynamic factor making for Jewish cohesiveness and survival.

Nonetheless, this approach, too, made the error of applying an alien category, that of "nationalism," to that unique collectivity which is Israel. Conceiving of Jewish life either as "religion" or as a "nationalism" in the usual meaning of the terms, means borrowing non-Jewish concepts that fail to do justice to the reality and complexity of the situation.

The reason is to be sought for in the unique development of Jewish tradition. In ancient times, all religious cults were national, that is, rooted in a specific ethnic or political group. At its inception, the religion of Israel was the religious and political union of several clans around a central shrine. The early Hebrew prophets, Moses, Deborah, and Samuel, strove to break the bonds of narrow tribal loyalties and thus were the authentic creators of Hebrew nationalism. This outlook the later "literary" prophets, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, deepened and emphasized for their uncomprehending and backsliding contemporaries. These great figures did not rest there. As the books of Isaiah, Micah, and Jonah indicate, they pressed forward to a profound universalistic outlook, embracing all the nations.

Yet even then, Judaism did not surrender its "Israelocentrism." It continued to place the Jewish people in the center of its universe, even after room had been made in its world-view for other nations. Thus there emerged a religion *both* universalistic and particularistic. There is an organic bond linking the people and the faith of Israel, so that Jewish nationalism cannot be made parallel to the secular forms of nationalism prevalent in the world today.

It is not to be denied that secular Jewish nationalism can serve the needs of the people of the State of Israel at least on the practical level. Whether it can serve permanently as a spiritual basis for Israeli Jewish life is debatable. For every secular nationalism must ultimately descend to the level of Stephen Decatur's utterance: "Our country! . . . may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong." Only a religiously oriented nationalism can hope to maintain permanently the ethical standpoint of Carl Schurz's reformulation: "Our country. . . . When right, to be kept right; when wrong, to be put right."

It is clear, however, that if we seek to apply this concept of secular nationalism to Diaspora Jewry in general and to American Jewry in particular, it will not merely prove ethically dangerous—but spell assimilation and extinction. It means the "writing off" of ten million Jews who live outside the new State of Israel.

The doctrine of *shelilut hagolah,* "the negation of the Diaspora," may be espoused with enthusiasm, indifference, or regret. It is particularly popular in Palestine, where Jewish life is lived most fully and naturally, and where, consequently, there is little sympathy and even less understanding for American problems. Even in America this doctrine is upheld by some of our most devoted artists, scholars, and thinkers. The relationship of American Jewry to Israel, as they conceive of it, may be summarized by the Hebrew term *nitzul,* which means both "salvage" and "exploitation." From the five million American Jews must be salvaged as many chosen spirits as possible, particularly among the youth, who will be willing to build their lives and share in the reconstruction of their people's existence in Israel. Helping to swell the ranks of this minority is, from this point of view, the basic, indeed the only significant task of Jewish education. Ultimately, American Jewry will assimilate and disappear, so it is held, but as it passes from the scene, it will have contributed of its human and material resources to the Jewish future in the homeland. American Jewry will thus have immolated itself upon the altar of national survival and in the process attained to vicarious immortality.

It is clear, then, that secular Zionism, *as Zionism,* is unable to supply a positive philosophy of Jewish life for America, whether or not it can do so in Israel. Secular nationalism is incapable of stemming the rising tide of assimilation and defection in Jewish ranks, and the lugubrious prophecy of the *sholelei hagolah* may well be proved true. But the future depends on subjective factors that have yet to crystallize, and the past does not offer unequivocal testimony on this point. All that can be asserted in the face of the heated discussions on Palestine and the Diaspora is that nothing has thus far proved permanent in Jewish life, except the Jewish people itself.

Actually the doctrine of *secular survival* in the Diaspora has taken on two distinct forms in modern times. Both of them, however, would seem to have been refuted by the irrefragable logic of events.

FIRST was the school of Diaspora nationalism, a doctrine preached by Dubnow and Zhitlowsky, which sought and helped to obtain minority group status for the Jews, after the First World War, at least on paper. This theory could arise only in Eastern Europe where Jews were a distinct community, with few political, economic, and cultural ties with their non-Jewish neighbors. The bloody destruction of East European Jewry has uprooted this theory, which never had any real relevance to American Jewry, nor did it, for that matter, find many adherents here.

In America most secular survivalists have espoused the doctrine of "cultural pluralism." According to the popular version of this doctrine, the goal of American life is not the fusing of all ethnic and cultural elements in a common melting pot, but rather the retention of the values brought to these shores by each of these groups, so that the sum total will enrich the quality of American culture. Each group is therefore to be encouraged not to discard its specific character, but rather to maintain it as its most valuable contribution to America. The assumption is that the Jewish group is fundamentally parallel in character to the Germans, the Italians, the Poles, the Swedes, and other immigrant stocks.

At first blush this seems an excellent approach, because it associates the Jewish future with that of millions belonging to other minorities. A closer examination, however, makes it clear that the doctrine of cultural pluralism, as currently advocated, mistakes a temporary working formula for a permanent philosophy and is therefore inadequate for preserving Jewish life in America.

The point to note is that even the most liberal of the pluralists look forward to the merging of these cultural elements and to the eventual loss of identity of the various groups within the American nation. Basically, they differ from the rabid apostles of Americanization in regard to the tempo and method of the change. Liberals may view it as harmless, and even as charming, for some American a hundred years hence to take pride in the fact that he is of Slovak, Polish, or Italian extraction, exactly as older Americans may boast of their Puritan, Dutch, or Huguenot origin. They may even regard it as desirable, for the sake of color or variety, for these "new Americans" to possess a greater degree of familiarity with their specific heritage than Americans of other groups. But they are not likely to favor an arrangement by which these groups remain distinct entities in America in perpetuity. It is true that in practice ethnic groups have rarely been absorbed completely. But even the approximations thus far attained by the Germans and the Scandinavians of the Middle West are close enough to give us pause, if we are concerned with meaningful Jewish survival.

In brief, the theory of cultural pluralism can help bridge the gap between more recent immigrant groups and Americans of older stock, and, in addition, it can introduce valuable cultural elements from abroad into the pattern of American life. These are highly significant contributions, but it is obvious that they cannot suffice for a truly Jewish survival, possessing content and vitality.

Actually the doctrine of cultural pluralism is maintained, if at all, by scattered English-speaking intellectuals, from whom it would be difficult to recruit a *minyan*—for more than one reason! They cling to the doctrine with a kind of tragic desperation only because they are unable to accept Jewish extinction and yet are unwilling to reexamine the body of their beliefs in an effort to discover a sounder rationale for Jewish survival. But life is inexorable. Just as a secularist who is a Zionist must, if he is logically consistent, become a *sholel hagolah,* a negator of a Jewish future in the Diaspora, so a secularist who is not a Zionist must ultimately become a *sholel hayahadut,* a negator of a Jewish future in the world.

A RATIONALE for the survival of Jewish life in America must be found. The elements of such an approach are to be derived from Jewish history, in both the pre-Emancipation and post-Emancipation periods.

In all the centuries preceding the French Revolution, Jewish survival was never seriously in doubt, in spite of countless physical perils, so long as the organic character of the Jewish community was retained, whether it was natural or compulsory in character. With the rise of the Emancipation, as we have seen, this organic concept of Jewish life was fragmentized and there developed partial views of the nature of Judaism—Judaism as a religion, Judaism as a secular nationalism—with an inevitable drive toward assimilation. There is a pressing need to restore the organic character of Jewish life, with one highly important difference to be discussed below—*the organic structure of Jewish life must be voluntary in character.* American Jews must be taught to recognize themselves for what they are, a *religio-cultural-ethnic group,* in which respect they are at one with their brothers in Israel and throughout the world.

In placing religion at the center of Jewish life, we are inventing no convenient doctrine to suit the practical needs of the hour. That the genius of Israel has revealed itself pre-eminently in the sphere of religion and morality is a self-evident historical truth. Accepting the centrality of religion means restoring the organic pattern of Jewish life. Those who believe in creative and permanent Jewish survival in America must recognize the religious basis of Jewish life and then insist that the Jewish religion be interpreted, in accordance with thirty-five centuries of Jewish history, in terms of the full richness of the Jewish heritage, instead of the anemic, debilitated forms that have all too often usurped its place.

It is quite understandable why those who believe in Jewish survival, Zionists, Hebraists, and others, have tended to view with well-justified suspicion any attempt to define Jewish life in essentially religious terms or to organize the Jewish community along such lines. It has generally served as a cloak for assimilation. But the error lay not in insisting that the Jewish people is basically religious, but in placing the Jewish religion upon a Procrustean bed and then lopping off all the national and most of the cultural elements that make it distinctive. For just as the Jewish people is not "like unto the nations," so the Jewish religion is not "like unto the religions." The Jew is neither merely a member of a nation, nor of a religion. If some term must be found to describe the Jews, it is not "religion" or "nationality," surely not "race"; it is the Hebrew word *am,* "people." For all their difference in outlook, political citizenship, and status, Jews the world over are members of one people, sharing a common history and a sense of kinship inherited from the past, a common tradition and way of life in the present, and a common destiny and hope for themselves and the world in the future. The nexus binding them together is not political, but religio-cultural in essence.

THE restoration of the organic pattern of Jewish community life, however, is by no means a return to the pre-Emancipation era. In certain quarters it is fashionable today to indulge in glorification of the medieval ghetto and to heap scorn upon the gains of the Emancipation as worthless and illusory. It would be both tragic and futile to attempt to turn the clock of history backward. We dare not forget the far-reaching material and spiritual benefits that accrued to modern Jews from the Emancipation, which integrated them once more, after the lapse of centuries, into the mainstream of world culture.

The conclusion is inescapable that the Jewish community of the future must be voluntary in nature. Jewish life in America lacks both the power and the desire to compel the adherence of its members. Hence, it must continue to oppose any effort at Jewish segregation from without and always defend the legal and social right of Jews to desert the Jewish community, if they so desire. The obvious corollary is that Jews will be free to accept as much or as little of the organic pattern of Jewish life as they see fit.

At this point a far-reaching and disastrous misinterpretation of the concept of the organic community has been taking root, largely because of some of its most perfervid advocates. The right of all Jews to a partial or minimal acceptance of Jewish values having been granted, the inference has then been drawn that every pattern of acceptance or rejection is equally valid, with the unwarranted and all but fatal conclusion that Jewish group life must be geared to include all who do not deny that they are Jews, and no more than that.

Thus a recent writer would utilize as the raw material of the organic community "the several million Jews in America who *do not happen* to belong to any Jewish organization, secular or religious, and who do not contribute to any Jewish philanthropy. . . . It will have to be recognized that the Jew's first affiliation, his initial basic affiliation is not with a synagogue or a Zionist group — but with the organic community. He need pay no dues, sign no membership card—need go through no motions of membership. By accepting his identification as a Jew he becomes a constituent unit of the community."* No wonder the author is able to solve at one stroke all the manifold problems involved in setting up the organic community by the glad announcement that "the Organic Community is already in existence!"

The fundamental error lies in assuming that if a group of Jews, each of whom espouses some partial aspect of Jewish life, or none at all, meet together, they constitute a community in any except the purely physical sense. As well call such a collection of fragments an organic community as describe the *disjecta membra* that Ezekiel saw in the Valley of Dry Bones as a living organism. That some Jews are interested in the synagogue, others in Zionism, others in relief or local philanthropy, still others in anti-defamation or in good will, does not create a community, but a chaos.

Because Jewish affiliation is a matter of free conscience in a democracy, the effort has been made time and again to find a concept of Judaism which would be so free from controversy or inner commitment that all Jews would accept it. But the attempt to find that formula has proved futile. What has resulted from the chase of the will-o'-the-wisp of Jewish unity has been Jewish vacuity.

So it is that agencies have grown up without any effort to analyze their underlying philosophy and implications. Thus we have witnessed the proliferation of community councils in many sections of the country, consisting of representatives of every conceivable Jewish organizational unit. If a community council acts as a kind of clearing house for the meetings of Jewish organizations, it serves a useful function, though all too often with a top-heavy machinery far out of proportion to its actual achievements. Unfortunately, it generally seeks to become the voice of the Jewish community. Since water tends to seek its lowest level, the community council usually finds it possible to agree with any real measure of unanimity only upon philanthropy and overseas relief, and to a slighter degree, to work out a kind of compromise among the competing agencies in the war against anti-Semitism. On the other hand, since the emphasis is placed upon conformity, cultural and religious undertakings are treated as unwelcome poor relations, to be dismissed with a pittance.

Moreover, we have substituted Jewish activity for Jewish living as the mark of the "good Jew." People would be scandalized today if any serious effort were made to judge a good Jew in terms of his personal character, his Jewish knowledge and observance, and the quality of the upbringing of his children, rather than in terms of his prominence and public contributions.

For too long, herculean efforts have been made to kidnap and cajole Jews into formal association with Jewish life. Hence the *sam hahayim* (elixir of life) which is Judaism

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*Carl Alpert in the *Reconstructionist,* May 27, 1949.

has been so sugar-coated that the therapeutic value of the medicine has been completely vitiated. Obviously, the Jewish religion is a most difficult pill to swallow for a modern Jew who lacks any knowledge or appreciation of his heritage, because it requires the greatest degree of personal involvement and demands changed patterns of behavior as well as habits of thought. Scarcely less far-reaching is acceptance of Jewish culture as an integral element of one's life. Hence these, the most distinctive and creative elements of organic Jewish life, remain the least cultivated under the formula of what is misnamed the organized Jewish community.

Plausible practical reasons for eliminating or soft-pedalling religion are, of course, advanced. First is the low level of religious loyalty, characteristic of our age as a whole, and especially of Jews, as various surveys have demonstrated. Second, it is argued, Jews are religiously divided into various groups—Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform—so that religious affiliation is divisive rather than unifying. Though this is not untrue, this contention may be fairly countered by pointing out that neither does secularism serve to unite Jews. Even on the broadest base of affiliation, which is philanthropy, the Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds count only a fraction of the five million American Jews among their contributors. The dissolution of the American Jewish Conference, which was due primarily not to its opponents, but to its friends and sponsors, showed to what extent secular Jewish loyalties are unable to unite Jews even in such areas as the defense of Jewish rights.

One can only admire the widespread quality of solicitude, expressed on every hand, for those who are politely called the "unaffiliated," whether because of intellectual considerations, real or alleged, or indifference, or even an addiction to financial thrift where matters spiritual are concerned. But the virtue is carried too far, if their hoped-for presence (and actual absence) in Jewish life is used to justify the elimination of all that is colorful and meaningful in Jewish experience and values. That many Jews are not willing to accept a religious affiliation means that the voluntary, organic Jewish community cannot and will not be organized by *all* Jews of America. An organic community on a voluntary basis means the free association not of those Jews who accept one or another element of Jewish life, or even none, but of those Jews who accept all the basic elements of Judaism as an organic unity. To avoid confusion, our goal should be called, not the organic Jewish community, but a *voluntary community dedicated to an organic view of Judaism.*

THE voluntary, organic Jewish community of tomorrow would not seek to win universal assent, nor would it presume to speak in the name of all American Jews, as is the all but universal custom of Jewish organizations today. It would be the spokesman of those Jews, however, who share a common outlook, expressed in some such platform as these ten principles:

1. The unity of Israel as a people, the world over, expressing itself in a common religious and cultural tradition;

2. The centrality of the Jewish religion as the essence of Jewish brotherhood;

3. The role of the land of Israel as offering not only a secure home for the millions of oppressed Jews in the world today, but an all-Jewish environment to further Jewish creativity and thus enrich the life of all Jews everywhere;

4. The survival of American Jewry as a vital and active element in the Jewish people;

5. Simultaneously, the position of American Jewry as an integral part of the American people, since group loyalties, morally conceived and culturally expressed, are not mutually exclusive;

6. The duty and destiny of Israel, as yet incompletely realized, to advance the messianic ideals of one God and one humanity, embodied in a world order of social justice, individual and group freedom, and universal peace;

7. The right of all Jews, affirmed by Jewish tradition, to fellowship in the people of Israel, however far removed they may be at present from an acceptance of an affirmative attitude toward Jewish tradition;

8. The welcoming of participation, in one or another phase of Jewish life, by such individuals and groups as are unable to give their assent to Jewish religious practices and ideals, with the recognition of the proper role that their activities occupy in the overall pattern of organic Jewish life;

9. The establishment of cooperative relations, wherever possible, between the organic Jewish community as here envisaged, and those elements of the Jewish people remaining outside its scope; and

10. The recognition that Jewish education, both for children and for adults, conceived in the broadest terms and based on the three pillars of faith, culture, and people, is the central concern and basic enterprise of the organic Jewish community.

WHAT organizational pattern would the voluntary community dedicated to organic Judaism take? On the local level it would be represented by the combined synagogue and Jewish center. It cannot be sufficiently stressed that a synagogue which is not a center is as inadequate as a center which is not a synagogue in doing justice to the organic character of Judaism. Only the synagogue-center, vitalized and active, reflects the integrity of Jewish life in all its phases.

More is needed to make a true synagogue-center than the addition of club and recreation facilities to the synagogue and the schoolhouse. Each congregation must become a cell of the organic Jewish community, accepting and implementing the standpoint, "I am a Hebrew, and nothing Jewish is alien to me." Hence, in addition to the various committees that give practical direction to the affairs of the congregation, committees should be created to study the situation and recommend attitudes and action by the congregation in all areas of Jewish life, such as philanthropy, civic defense, higher Jewish education, overseas relief, and cultural activity.

Members of the congregation who by virtue of their interests or experience in special organizations are more familiar with one field or another, would serve on these committees. For it will be freely conceded that most, though not all, Jewish organizations perform useful functions and have their place in the ideal structure of Jewish life. But they must no longer be permitted to usurp the monopoly of power and influence which they now possess. Putting first things first and last things last is the beginning of wisdom.

The reports and recommendations of these committees would make meetings of the congregation into town meetings. Instead of the synagogue being perpetually exploited for every cause, good, bad, and indifferent, the congregation would now assess the role of each, applauding its achievements, criticizing its shortcomings, and thus help to develop an informed as well as a loyal constituency.

In each community where there is more than one synagogue, the initiative should be taken to organize a local council of synagogues, to coordinate their study of issues, and to speak with a united voice on the problems—and they are legion—where agreement exists among all who cherish the synagogue as the central and all-embracing sanctuary of Jewish life.

These local units would be organized into the Congregation of American Jewry. Ideally, such an agency already exists on the American scene, the Synagogue Council of America. Unfortunately, long years of inaction, due largely to lack of support, have gradually weakened its potentialities. While our various national agencies possess tremendous resources of power and finance, the Synagogue Council has had to go begging for crumbs from their tables during the last few years, when zealous efforts were made to revitalize the organization.

An even more important weakness is the fact that by its constitution the Synagogue Council of America guarantees to each of its constituent organizations the right to veto any proposal when "matters of religious principle" are involved. This safeguard was felt to be necessary originally in order to get the three groups—Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform—to work together under the aegis of the Council. Unfortunately, the phrase "religious principle" is so elastic that years ago it was found expedient to avoid protracted debates as to whether or not such principles were involved, by permitting any constituent agency to veto any project coming before the Council. Thus the Council relives the tragic story of the Polish parliament of the 18th century and the unhappy experience of the United Nations, where a veto power all but destroys the effectiveness of the agency. The time is overdue for the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform leaders, lay and rabbinic, who have worked together for over a quarter of a century, both in the Synagogue Council and without, to demonstrate their mutual confidence in each other and call into being the supreme organ of the religious household of American Israel.

If this consummation, so devoutly to be wished, cannot be realized in the near future, and the Synagogue Council cannot fulfill its manifest destiny, the quest for a vital center for the American Jewish community of the future must nevertheless go on. That there has been need for such a central agency has been clear to all fair-minded observers. Such varying approaches as the National Assembly for Labor Israel, which met last June in New York City, the proposal of Rabbi Barnett R. Brickner for a meeting of Jewish thinkers and scholars to consider the future of American Jewry, the conference called by the Zionist Organization of America's Education Committee in February 1948 on "Reorienting Zionist Education Today," and the Rifkind Committee on the future status of the Zionist movement, all indicate a growing awareness of this problem.

By and large, however, these undertakings are motivated by specific organizational needs, worthy as they may be, and are not likely to advance the far-reaching goal we have set before us. On the other hand, a proposal which rests upon assumptions largely in agreement with those here presented, has been made by Mr. Henry Hurwitz, editor of the *Menorah Journal*. In articles and addresses he has called for the convening of what he calls, not too happily, the "Jewish Assembly of Representatives in America," or JARA.*

His formulation, admittedly tentative, would require restatement in several particulars. Thus he says that this agency would become the representative body of "all American Jews who consider themselves as differing from their fellow Americans only in religion." His discussion of the tasks and attitudes of this new body indicates, however, that he recognizes the broader and truer base of Jewish affiliation which we have described as the religio-cultural character of Jewish peoplehood. So, too, his approach suffers from a vestigial bias against Zionism and from his involvement in a controversy with the United Jewish Appeal of New York on allocations.

But these are minor drawbacks against the larger background of the need for a vital, functioning organization of the religious household of American Jewry. He suggests (a) a special commission on higher learning and letters to consider the needs and activities of institutions of learning and agencies dedicated to literature and the arts—all now going begging in the country; (b) a commission on colleges and universities, to encourage Jewish cultural and religious influence in the lives of college students; (c) a commission on foreign relief and rehabilitation, to assess the past achievements and the future program of our overseas agencies; and (d) a commission on inter-faith relations, to review this expensive item of American Jewish activity in terms of its efficacy and value.

Obviously there would be considerable resistance by the powerful agencies operating in some of these fields to any review of their policies—all they want of American Jews is financial support. But the JARA, or the Congregation of American Jewry, would insist upon knowing and deciding where funds would go, instead of placing the rabbis and congregations of America at the disposal of these agencies for exploitation.

It is conceivable that certain sections of the organized Jewish religious community may decline to participate in such an undertaking. One hopes, however, that the tragic experience of the last decade and the glorious possibilities of the future will have brought home to Jews in every camp who are dedicated to the interpretation of Judaism as an organic totality with religion as its central element, the recognition of the truth that "we must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately." Countless Orthodox rabbis and laymen have shown this attitude and they can be counted upon to influence their group in the direction of participation.

There is also a possibility that some sections of Reform Jewry might hesitate to accept a philosophy based on the recognition of Jewish peoplehood, but this seems a remote contingency. The whole history of Reform in the past few decades has brought the movement incomparably closer to the mainstream of Jewish life.

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*See his article "Toward a Noble Community" in the *Menorah Journal*, Autumn 1948, and the Symposium in the Winter 1949 issue.

But even if one or another segment declines to join the movement, the effort must be made, and soon, to organize that portion of the Jewish community which accepts the fundamentals expounded above and refuses to be content with the shadow of a shadow. The wise words of Maimon remain true: "It is better for a Jew to hold on to Judaism with a finger, than to let go altogether." But we dare not forget the first half of his utterance: "It is better for a Jew to hold on with a whole hand than only with a finger."

The creation of a virile body, representative of the religious household of American Jewry, does not betoken an expulsion of non-religious Jews from the Jewish people. The Congregation of American Jewry would embark upon a continuous campaign of education to win the loyalty of those who have lost touch with the religious tradition and the cultural treasures of Judaism. It would encourage its constituencies to launch a campaign for *teshuvah* (turning) and Torah among American Jews. Once we have abandoned the chimerical notion that the only program worth fighting for is the one endorsed by all, and surrender the vulgar obeisance before the majority, we shall be free to build the Saving Remnant of American Israel.

Jews who could not accept, in their personal lives, the religio-cultural character of Jewish peoplehood, but would be sympathetic to the concept of a voluntary community dedicated to organic Judaism, would be encouraged to participate in such aspects of the program as they wished. Far from alienating any Jew from his people, the Congregation of American Jewry would accept the principle embodied in the Talmudic statement: "Even if he has sinned, an Israelite remains an Israelite" (Sanh. 44b). It would always seek to win the allegiance of large sections of the unaffiliated, but it would not make the unaffiliated the touchstone of how much, or, more accurately, how little of Judaism can suffice us.

This proposed plan for organizing the American Jewish community through the medium of local synagogue councils is not the only possible mode of encompassing our goal, especially in communities where the religio-cultural-ethnic concept of Jewish peoplehood is already widely accepted in the thinking of men and women. Here an already existent community council might be transformed in such a manner as to reflect this conception and to advance the religious and cultural aspects of Jewish life, which are all too often ignored and minimized at present. This goal may be achieved in varying ways. One method would lie in retaining the present structure of the community council, while giving to religious and cultural institutions a larger representation than that accorded to other agencies.

Another procedure would be to reorganize the community council in bicameral fashion, with a council of synagogues and a council of organizations. The council of synagogues would express structurally the central significance of the religious and cultural life of the community as well as the totality of Jewish activities conducted by the synagogue-centers. At the same time, the experience and special interests of non-synagogue organizations would not be dissipated, but would find a forum of free expression in the council of organizations.

Community action would be contingent upon agreement by both councils. Where differences would emerge, these would be reconciled by conference and compromise, as happens in the two houses of the American Congress.

Community councils of this type would find it possible to consider and take action on the central, and not merely the peripheral elements of Jewish life. With the passing of time, the religio-cultural-ethnic character of Jewish peoplehood would become increasingly accepted in practice, and not merely in theory, as is now generally the case. It would then be possible to simplify the community organization and utilize it with even greater effectiveness, in order to enhance the religious vitality and cultural creativity of American Jewry, which constitute its only true reason for being.

# NO GREATER LOVE

## *A Story*

### MORTIMER SLAIMAN

UNCLE AVRAHAM was dying. Slowly, his sons and nephews and nieces had come by train from the Bronx and Long Island to his small cold-water flat in Brighton Beach. His one living brother had flown from Pittsburgh. For three days they had waited for the moment they could bury Uncle and return home.

The voices in the other room were aimless. Occasionally, he heard one ask for a newspaper; and twice a day they sent someone to the bakery for rolls—only then did he feel the impact of purpose in their sounds. Uncle Avraham knew they were eating more than the doughy delightful rolls he had long been forbidden to eat, for his room was woven with the sweet pungent odor of chicken soup. He sniffed at it leisurely, there was plenty of time. And once, when the babble in the living room had sunk into forgetting the few words they knew (Yes, Uncle's an old man, but . . . a full life if I ever saw one), he had caught the crackling sound of a lone chop frying on his hot-plate. Still, the only sound of life he could explore in the other room was the question that came twice a day—who's going down for the rolls? No one would answer, but seconds later the door would slam and Uncle Avraham would try not to think of anything until he heard the lock click and could "see" the paper bag float into the room. Onion rolls and bagels there must be, he thought, working his toothless gums up and down.

Today they knew he would die—Uncle Avraham sensed that in their hushed expectancy. In return for their smells of soup and chops, he had sent them full warning that he had almost fully decayed from his cancer. The smells of his illness and the soup had since blended and he knew that none of them was sure any more which was soup and which cancer. His brother, Itzik, had been getting worse and worse with his disgust. That morning he had stamped his foot and spat angrily—this is worse than sitting *shiva*!

Uncle Avraham had smiled when he heard this—there was much to forgive in Itzik, he thought, and felt no bitterness that he, Avraham the younger, had to go first. Not that he wanted to die, oh no, but Itzik had always loved and protected him. Ever since that day on the hard-frozen lake near Kiev when they fought the goyim did he know what it was to be loved by his brother.

THEY had left the cheder in high spirits that afternoon. Itzik had arranged a meeting with the goyim on the ice and throughout the last hour they had whispered excitedly to one another while the rabbi hovered around them trying to keep order with great crashings of his ruler. When the rabbi dismissed them with a resigned shrug of his shoulders they catapulted from the room and ran to the lake, Avraham pumping merrily beside Itzik, and around them pranced a dozen or so other boys, *yarmalkes* plastered firmly on their skulls.

As far as their eyes cared to see, the lake was a solid block of ice cut crisscross with sleigh tracks. But they were not interested in the thin line of trees barely visible across the ice. Before them, about a hundred yards out, stood twenty goyim. The boys stopped and stared fiercely at their adversaries; Avraham felt his heart dancing. As Itzik quickly surveyed the situation, Av-

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raham clung to him feeling great excitement and fear—why, these were the same goyim who had chased him home from cheder last week when Itzik had been propped up in bed with the grippe!

Itzik spoke briefly. "They outnumber us, but we have the advantage of the hill. Let them come to us!" With that he reached down, picked up a stone, carefully brushing it clean of snow, then he nodded to the boys. They fanned out, hurriedly stacking piles of rocks and pieces of ice. Itzik walked to the edge of the lake and spat taunts across the ice. The goyim quickly gathered the ammunition of ice and rocks at their feet, and rushed toward them, sliding precariously on the slippery ice. One of them tripped in the furrow of a sleigh track and fell like a plum in his padded clothing; the load of rocks he carried clattered around him.

On the bank, the little band jumped up and down laughing and screaming insults at the fallen boy. Itzik smiled and said, "The goyim. No heads on the goyim. Let them come to us." He then laughed louder than the rest. Itzik was ten years old and Avraham was six—big brother and little brother.

As Avraham lay pressed in his bed and thought of this he found the last phrase blessed with sweetness and he repeated it audibly—"lil broth' and big broth' "—satisfied that he could speak so clearly without any teeth and dying.

Nothing much really happened after the goyim charged except that Avraham was quite excited. There was a great joy in tossing rocks at the enemy although he couldn't throw them very far, he was so small.

It seemed only a matter of minutes before the enemy exhausted their supply of ammunition, and there was no replacing it—all the rocks were on the bank, and they had also used up all the loose chunks of ice lying about. Avraham remembered looking eagerly at Itzik; the latter's eyes shown with a messianic brilliance, but filmed with a mist as if he were sitting over a cup of hot tea. Itzik drew up to his full height, a rock held firmly in his upraised arm, and yelled, "Aie, charge them!" His brother's shout reached the now frightened crew on the ice who stood helplessly for a moment, then fled in all directions like streaks of twisted radiations from a cartwheel hub.

Itzik and Avraham rushed headlong after them, but they were soon outdistanced. And that was all there was to the incident on the lake, except that Avraham loved his brother more and more for his bravery and protection.

The next morning they learned that Szoli, one of the boys who had been with them at the lake, had taken a fever in the night and couldn't be roused in the morning. Avraham had cried a lot, and even now on his own deathbed he felt remorse for the long-forgotten boy. How funny it was, he thought, that I wept for Szoli as if he were my own brother—Szoli, who in turn bullied me and tossed me left-over sweets. But I was very young then, and that must be the way all children act.

The day of the funeral, Avraham's mother dressed him more carefully than usual, and in the sweat of holding still while his jacket buttons were fastened, he burst out suddenly almost with surprise at his own words, "Momma, I don't like to walk at funerals."

Itzik looked up and laughed, his strong round face flushed from the exertion of tying the long laces on his high shoes. "But Avraham, you have to walk at funerals," he said. "Szoli is the only one who rides." Avraham threw his arms around his mother's large waist and pressed himself against her, wailing and stamping his feet.

"Oh, momma, momma, I don't want to walk at anybody's funeral," he cried, thinking of the procession for his father the year before, and how he had broken away from his mother to run through the somber group of relatives and friends huddled tightly against the cold and the grief. He had been tolerated and finally, when he tripped and fell, he heard his Aunt Sophia say bitterly, "Children don't know what it is to die."

"Oh, momma, momma!" he wailed with renewed fury. He had cried when they told him of Szoli's death, but wasn't that enough. He didn't want to walk at the funeral. The year had proven to him that his father was not coming back—Szoli would not come back either, so why drag out the bad news with a slow march to the cemetery and seven days sitting *shiva.* Besides, when his father did not return from work day after day, he slowly turned more and more to Itzik. A few times he dreamt of his father, and woke sobbing, but Itzik, sleeping alongside, would wake grumpily and hold Avraham in his arms, patting his head and mumbling, "There, that's all, go to sleep now."

The street was no street. As far as Avraham could see the snow lay like a thick mattress between the two rows of houses. As he stepped into the sunlight, he said "this is momma's bed," and he felt a delightful urge to jump up and down on the "mattress"; but Avraham saw quickly that this was a funeral.

Szoli rode in a box on a horse-drawn sleigh. Around were relatives and friends. Avraham plunged his hand into Itzik's pocket and felt comforted by his brother's arm around his shoulders. Avraham behaved well this time, and his brother enjoyed taking care of him, pleased with the wise old smiles nodded at them by everyone. Avraham felt good that his brother was pleased, but he worried because all the folks around them looked old and weary. He was sure that Szoli wouldn't have liked that, he was always running and jumping.

UNCLE Avraham felt his hands quiver as he thought of this. He looked at them resting placidly across his chest. The fingers were strings of knuckles and joints; and he thought bitterly of the thousands of Jews who had fed those palms, that begging collection-box, with coins, bills, and checks in his roamings over America. His forty-four years in this country had been one song—a little for Palestine? And like Szoli he had run and jumped, but in the name of a row of trees, a settlement, a school. He had squeezed them hard for the Homeland. But never had he wanted to go there; at most, he had said in his rasping voice—maybe to die, but this is my country.

His country. From the peeling piles of back-alley hotels to the coffee and knishes to the smoky coaches—his country. As he lay with the stone in his throat he saw the swimming faces of all the ones in Chicago, in Detroit, in Tallahassee, in all the tired little towns, who had made for him a country, linked by his convincing collection-box. Occasionally, there had been a Catholic priest who sat in lazy contemplation of this man who boiled like a kettle as he sat talking of his love for God and his work in His name and the name of His people. But with these few exceptions, Uncle Avraham rode the coaches from Jew to Jew.

His eyes grew moist as he thought of the many births that had grown up into businesses, medical practice, the law . . . into his mind whirled the image of a tub of butter and a three-foot ladle. Avraham was twenty-two and he stirred vigorously, but now, old and dying, although the ladle flew in his mind, the butter turned very slowly into a churn of faces, then it was butter again. He heard a voice call from the door leading to the back yard—Avraham, oh Avraham, I go to America next week! Avraham looked up, the ladle fell from his hands and he blushed feeling taut and tender before Hannah.

"The Boroshlivs paid me an extra month's wages, Avraham, and blessed me. Little Anna was so sweet, she cried for her governess who was going to America. Oh, Avraham, I am so excited!"

Uncle Avraham remembered how, as she ran to him, her red hair flew behind her like flames darting before the bellows. She fell into his arms; then she held him tighter as if trying to burn herself through him. Avraham stood as stiff as the ladle, words frozen in his throat.

"Avraham, you will go with me? You can borrow the money."

Avraham hung his head. "You know I have to take care of momma. There's no one left but me, now that Itzik has gone to America." He felt a brief pain, but stifled it immediately. Itzik had every right to go—he is the oldest; and he can set things right, so when I get there it won't be a strange place.

"But Avraham," Hannah cried, "your momma can stay with Aunt Sophia; or she can come with us."

"Momma wants to be buried here, Hannah."

Hannah stepped back, and moved her head slowly from side to side.

The following week she said goodbye and he gave her Itzik's address so she would have someone to go to when she got to America. Avraham never saw her again. After six months of many letters, he received a short note from Hannah saying that she and Itzik were to be married. He had bolted through the door, the note crushed in his hand; and for the rest of the afternoon he had walked slowly around the butter churn in the yard. No thoughts had come to him, but his bones and muscles had a poison in them that had to be siphoned off.

Before the year came to its end, Avraham was in America, but he couldn't face Itzik and Hannah. He had sent them a brief note telling that he had buried momma, and then wrote no more.

ONCE in the land he allowed himself to be swallowed up by its vastness. The trip across the ocean had been long, and Uncle Avraham had thought at first that he would settle in New York; but he kept moving, riding trains until his money gave out, then hitch-hiking and working for meals. After two years of this moving around he returned to New York penitent and drained of the need to escape.

He took a job as a sweeper in a dress factory, and rented a room in the Bronx. On Sunday evenings he went to "socials" at the Workmen's Circle, and there he met Rachel, a large ample woman who had some of his momma's features: dry brittle-looking chestnut hair caught in a "bun" at the back of the neck, and a round flushed face with two dark eyes set deep like pinheads on a fluffy chair cushion. She stood in contrast to the lean hunger which had turned Avraham into a reed, his cheeks hollow and his eyes dull as if he didn't want to see. They were married on a rainy Sunday afternoon. The shul was full of Rachel's family; of the mountain of rubbers and galoshes in the hall, only two pairs belonged to friends of Avraham. The rest of the black pile lay like an assortment of strange broken feet, he thought.

Avraham lived with Rachel for three years and she bore him two sons. Then, one Sunday as he walked out of the house for rolls and the newspaper, he thought of Hannah. A panic seized him, and he walked fast to try and melt it down; but it grew, dragging his stomach and guts, his arms and legs, into the ground. This was the first of many panics.

Every time it was the same. Hannah would come to mind, and as the years passed, a dark shadow loomed up behind her. Once, he said its name—"Itzik"—but never afterward.

That day, when Avraham first thought of Hannah, he saw only "her"; all other sights and sounds of his neighborhood world were lost to him, and he followed her image as it scampered playfully among the pillars of the Elevated. Recalling this on his deathbed, he had to smile, because he could think of it only in terms of a movie comedy. He, Avraham Hope, Costello, Chaplin walking through traffic in a daze, mad horns shrieking at him from all sides, brakes wrenching careening autos to premature stops: through it all he walked unmindful of the noise—a sleepwalker in the Bronx on a blazing Sunday morning.

It had stopped suddenly. He lost "her" in a gang of young boys who had jumped off the rear end of a trolley. As they clustered around him, he searched his hands—they were empty. Where were the rolls, he thought, and the newspaper. He looked up and read the street sign; he was two miles from home.

AVRAHAM stayed away for four years and went thousands of miles away from Rachel and the two children. He found a job soliciting funds for a Hebrew charity that paid more than he had made as a sweeper in the factory. From various way-stops, as he went across and up and down the country, he sent home three-fourths of his earnings. At first, Rachel's letters were bitter, but he kept sending money and promising to return. Finally, he did return—from Pittsburgh. There he had spent an afternoon with the rabbi of one of the large temples, arguing the virtues of various money-raising techniques. As he spoke, he felt proud that he was able to argue so intelligently with the learned rabbi. His argument was sound: if you collect for orphans, you are an orphan; if the money is to go to a hospital, you act the crippled child for the unwilling benefactor. But, acting was not enough. You had to be; Avraham had had no difficulty, he was both broken and alone.

When the rabbi felt the depths to which this man's sympathy had carried him, he asked Avraham, perhaps out of sympathy, if he was related to Itzik and Hannah, two new members of his congregation, whose last name also happened to be Ishnow. Avraham had screamed "no," then clutched at his temples with his finger tips, as if to dig out his brains by the roots. The rabbi offered him some brandy which he gulped greedily; and he gradually grew more calm under the rabbi's maternal hand as the other slowly stroked Avraham's bowed head.

He had returned to the Bronx. As a gesture to show that he had never left home, Avraham presented to Rachel a half-dozen rolls and the *Daily News* and *Mirror*. She had brushed the crumbs off the kitchen table, laid down the papers and rolls, then sat expectantly, the palms of her hands turned upward in her lap as if she expected him to drop something in them. Avraham merely shrugged, then went into the bathroom without a word. He had been expecting more of a greeting from Rachel than that. I know I have been away for four years, he thought, but she should be glad to see me.

It was the same when the two boys came home from school. They too were strangers to Avraham, and so he left them all again. That evening, he packed his valise. He tried to return only once after that, at the outbreak of the First World War, when his boys, Jack and Harry, were nineteen and twenty-one. They turned him away from the door and told him that he had been killing Rachel for fifteen years. It was easy for him to leave—he had been turned away by many strangers while soliciting and the two boys didn't look like the one picture he had of them, taken ten years before. They too were strangers.

When Rachel died he was sent a notice by his sons, but beneath the raised black printing they had written briefly: "Don't come. Jack and Harry."

He was now too old for traveling, and besides, during the years some of his money bought stocks and bonds—gilt-edged from AT&T and Coca-Cola. Avraham retired to a small room in Brighton Beach. There, by watching his account carefully, he was able to spend his days with little worry. His small radio kept him informed of the Second World War, and then the war in Palestine. After his standard breakfast of a knish and coffee, he might meet some cronies on the boardwalk and talk of many things—they all referred to these sessions privately as "the retired man's *shmoos.*"

Time and his life moved slowly, but one day it spurted into his handkerchief. At the clinic they told him the worst—cancer of the thyroid and some TB infection. And today he was dying. For the last week, Avraham had been in a coma. In that time his sons had been notified by his landlady, and they, somehow, found Itzik who came without Hannah.

From their conversation in the other room, Avraham learned that Hannah had died two years ago under the surgeon's knife, and that the whole family, especially Jack and Harry, thought that he, Uncle Avraham, had wandered away from home in search of women and liquor. Itzik had questioned them carefully on this, but he said very little otherwise. Avraham could feel his brother weighing carefully all that they said, and he was glad.

His brother really loved him, he thought, and had protected him. Itzik did not deserve hatred.

The blood throbbed, then pounded in his brain. Along its mad journey it carried Hannah's name, then a curse on her head. No, his brain shrieked, Itzik was not to blame, Hannah could have waited. He felt his very being curse her in her grave. All that was left of his body hurled itself headlong at the headstone of her grave.

With this imaginary effort, Avraham actually half sat up in his bed. For a brief instant he gazed wildly through the slightly parted curtains which admitted a patch of sky, a tremendous sign reading "Baths," and beyond it a distant ferris wheel small as a wedding band.

He sank back against the pillows, moaning and tossing his body from side to side, his hands pressed to his temples to keep the blood and hate from gushing out into the small world around him.

AVRAHAM heard a voice in the other room say excitedly, "Uncle's come out of it!" Feet shuffled and then the door opened slowly. The face of a small girl peered cautiously around its edges. He didn't recognize her. In a moment, the door swung wide on its hinges and the room was filled with strangers. The only face he recognized was that of his landlady.

She came up to the foot of his bed, the others pressed close around her. Avraham looked from one to the other slowly, then he lowered his eyes.

"This is your brother, Avraham," she said in a low voice. He looked up at her. She was pointing to a tall, heavy-set man with a large rocklike head. Avraham's gaze passed down to Itzik's mildly smiling eyes, then to his silk tie covered with red and white flowers, and finally he stared at the gold chain which hung in a graceful curve across his stomach.

"And this is your eldest son, Harry," she said quickly as if anxious to leave them all. Avraham's eyes darted to his son. The latter looked at him expectantly with some of Avraham's shyness etched in his face. He was dressed in a dark gray suit which must have been pressed many times. He looks like me, Avraham thought.

The room was very still. The children seemed to sense that something beyond death was going on around them and they stared wide-eyed at Avraham, then clung tightly to their mothers. Harry reached down and took Avraham's hand. "I . . ." he began to say, but he choked. One of the girls began to cry. Before another word could be spoken, heavy footsteps were heard clumping into the other room. "Where the hell is everybody?" a grating voice called. They all turned, and those nearest the door shushed the speaker in the other room.

"It's Jack," Harry said. The others moved away from the door as a well-built man in his late thirties entered in a bright sport suit, clutching a bag of rolls in one hand and a newspaper in the other. On his face was a graveness so deep that it could only be acting, and in an instant it did turn into a loud smile. "How's it going?" he asked placing the rolls and paper on the bed. Avraham started to hunch his shoulders and say with them "not good not bad," when the movement sent pain stabs through his neck. He lay still and tried to smile.

As if ignoring Avraham's pain, Jack pointed to the woman beside him and said: "I'll bring you up to date. This is Rosie, my wife; and here is Susan Ellen, my daughter, and . . ." Jack named all the faces in the maze huddled around the bed, but Avraham let his eyes fall only on Itzik.

His brother looked prosperous, he thought, and seemed happy . . . even with Hannah gone.

Again, there was silence. Avraham turned his eyes to Jack. There he was, smiling as if he had done his duty, but without the slightest thought that his father lay dying. A sharp pain cut through Avraham, and he moaned slightly, then coughed. Sputum lay on his lips.

Jack whispered hurriedly to those around him and they all filed out, except Jack and Harry and Itzik. The room was clothed with the echoes of shuffling feet and hushed sounds.

"Well," Jack said jovially, "is there anything we can do for you?"

As he heard the question, Avraham

thought of only one thing: I must let them give me something or I go to my grave alone. He rummaged through the possibilities, but found that there was nothing he needed—except love, and that he couldn't ask for. Then his eyes fell on the bag of rolls on the bed.

"Jack, I don't ask for much," he said. "Jack, just one onion roll."

Itzik threw back his head and laughed, the gold watch chain dancing before his heaving stomach. "Hell yes," he said, "give him a roll, Jack; he's letting us off easy."

A stubborn pucker flashed across Jack's face. "But the doctor said he wasn't allowed to eat rolls."

"Ach, Jack, one roll can't hurt him," Itzik said looking expectantly for the other to quit his foolishness. However, Jack seemed to be thinking bitterly of something. His face clouded, and he said finally, "No rolls."

Harry, who had been standing off to the side, walked to the bed and without a word tore into the bag, but Jack caught his arm. "I said no rolls, Harry."

"You crazy race-track bastard, take your hands off me," Harry shouted, wrenching his arm free. "I have as much to say about this as you do—and the doctor doesn't count any more."

Jack threw out his chest and pouted at full height, then turned and walked out the door. His face was spread with anger, but with the same promise that it would vanish as his graveness had.

"Here," Harry said, offering a roll to Avraham, "take it. Jack gets a little annoying sometimes, but he means well."

The flash of words had sucked the strength out of Avraham's arms, and he turned his head torturedly, his eyes and blubbering lips saying no to the rolls but begging for help instead. Harry and Itzik bent down to him and held his hands. "I . . . you tell me what your luck has been all these years," Avraham said, knowing that it wasn't a roll he wanted but the love of a few people to carry to his grave. He wept, and as his arms fluttered in slight spasms, Harry and Itzik held them tighter. He wanted to slide back away from them, but their strength kept him here and now. Here and now, he thought feverishly, I've got to find out about Hannah.

But, instead of asking about Hannah, he said to his son, "What's the matter with Jack, Harry?" Harry's face fell, and Avraham's heart cried out for him, cried with his bitter knowledge of the torment which paraded behind lowered eyes.

"Nothing, nothing's with Jack," Harry muttered.

"Harry," Itzik said, putting his beefy arm around the other's bowed shoulders, "why don't you tell your father what you boys are doing?"

"He's not . . ." Harry cried squirming away from Itzik and clutching at the bed posts, his eyes pleading at Avraham. Harry's words tumbled and clattered as if falling down a chute. "Oh, for God's sake, why did you have to leave us? We loved you, I loved you, Jack said that he didn't but he did even with mother and the horses. Jack made me sign the funeral announcement. Why, why did you leave us?"

Avraham looked at Itzik, and he was about to say "you tell him why," but something in the well-settled hardness on his brother's face told him that he had lost interest—it had all happened so long ago.

"Harry, my boy," Avraham said weakly, "it's over now; if I can die with love around me, I will die happy. Can I, can you do any more?"

HARRY bent over Avraham and kissed him on the forehead, then he walked slowly from the room. Avraham felt his son go from him, then he became aware of a sense of power as he lay there—he was alone with Itzik in the room. He was dying, and he had the rights of the dying for last requests; this much was clear to him. I've got to find out about Hannah, he thought; but again, another question passed his lips; only this time he sensed vaguely that between his thoughts and what he said there was a connection.

"Itzik, do you like to walk at funerals?"

Itzik's eyes widened, his mouth parted slightly in surprise.

"Don't you remember, Itzik, when Szoli died?"

"Szoli?"

"In Kiev, Itzik—Szoli's funeral. Don't you remember momma dressing me—and I said I didn't like to walk at funerals."

"Oh, sure, sure," Itzik said, saying that he didn't remember.

Avraham closed his eyes feeling at peace. Itzik didn't remember, but he still loved him and was protecting him.

"Hannah," Avraham mumbled, the name passing his lips for the first time since Kiev. "Little Hannah."

"*Little* Hannah?" Itzik laughed.

Avraham stared up at him wonderingly.

Seeing his brother's eyes, Itzik fumbled for his wallet and handed Avraham a photograph long turned brown. In the lower corner was written in white ink—"1912, New York." The picture was of Hannah, beautiful and tiny, flooded with a bustle skirt. Her face was serious, but Avraham saw that it suppressed the excitement it had shown when she danced around the butter churn.

Again, Itzik had protected him from a painful thought! Sure, she must have been fat when she died, but between Itzik and Avraham now was only this beautiful girl. Avraham held out his hand which Itzik grasped firmly. Now I can rest, Avraham thought. Clouds floated through his brain, mixing, stretching out; and he heard footsteps once again in the room.

Suddenly, a monstrous pain shot through his throat and he clutched at it wildly, then flung his hand across the bed sweeping the bag of rolls onto the floor. The clouds and the pain melted into a clot and he felt himself sinking beneath its weight.

Going under, he heard far off sounds of children crying, and one voice, Itzik's, saying, "Jack, *meshugah,* why didn't you let him have the roll?"

His brother loved and protected him! The clot turned into a rock and he was no more.

## GOTHIC LANDSCAPE

### IRVING LAYTON

They stand like penitential Augustines
These trees; and in my Jewboy mind they are monks,
Brown-robed, fearful after their long sleep in dungeons;
When I was a child one of them nearly caught me,
But I escaped, tunneling the snow to my mother's face—
Under her gray shawl I saw God's Assyrian beard,
And a page of *lameds* racing towards me like ostriches.

I've taken no vow not to forget
The torquemadas stirring in the frosty veins:
But the cloister bells deafen me with insults,
And sallowfaced acolytes inform
The snowdrifts what to whisper against me;
Autos-da-fé make red the immaculate sky;
Come soon, O bright Tudor sun!
I do not like this monastic whiteness of winter—
It is a Christ drained of all blood.

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Irving Layton has published two volumes (poetry and short stories), *Here and Now* and *Now Is the Place.* Mr. Layton was born in 1912 in Rumania and now teaches at the Herzliah school in Montreal, Canada.

# MAHLER: FATHER OF MODERN MUSIC

## *He Led the Break with Romanticism*

### KURT LIST

ROMANTIC music, most fully developed in the work of German composers of the mid-19th century, remains a favorite with modern audiences; but it also represents the beginning of a deep stagnation and a drying up of virility and originality. By 1870 it had already become a kind of background, an illustrative "sound track," to ideas and ideologies that were themselves losing their interest and relevance: sentimental nationalism, Wagnerian mysticism, romantic *Weltschmerz.* In the Italy of that time we find the opera given over to cheap sensationalism, and only the eruptions of a Verdi redeemed the genre from time to time. Russian music, hardly come into its own, had already passed through the most heterogeneous development in an attempt to remain national and at the same time assimilate modern Western style. French music, rigidly formalistic, enjoyed in Offenbach an occasional respite from the tasteless glorification of the Second Empire, but was on the whole pompous and without ambition. In Austria and Germany proper, where the fanciful ideas of romanticism flourished most luxuriantly, great composers like Brahms and Wagner, themselves guilty in part of the cult of "program music," yet also responsible for a tremendous widening of the musical medium, spread mediocrity by their influence. A genius was badly needed to rescue music from that Victorian complacency which so often mistook idle literary fantasy for true imagination.

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At the beginning of the school of modern music that flowered in Schoenberg stands the work of Gustav Mahler, who was the first to break out of the stiffening molds of 19th-century romanticism and move in the direction which many critics feel offers the most fruitful possibility for music in the 20th century. Kurt List suggests that public neglect of Mahler's work may be at the root of the general failure to understand what is being done in modern music, and he here attempts an exposition of the contribution of this great originator. Mr. List, who has written frequently for Commentary on musical subjects, is the editor of the music magazine *Listen.* His most recent contribution to Commentary was "The Folk Revival in Jewish Music," in the November 1949 issue.

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The French solved the problem by a characteristic compromise. Debussy, substituting vague impressions of nature for the conventional literary "program," managed to create a kind of impersonal music whose brilliance and aloofness were frequently taken for the qualities of pure abstraction. But what Debussy actually did was split the evolution of Western music in two: his own path was that of sensuous detachment; the other and later path became expressionism, exemplified in the work of such a composer as Anton Bruckner, who brought romantic music to a more personal level, making it the vehicle not of ideas but of individual—and often eccentric—emotion. The consequences of this split are felt today no less than when it first became apparent.

It was in Austria, which witnessed the birth of romantic music in Beethoven and Schubert, that romantic music and its achievements were transformed into something new. Gustav Mahler was one of the leaders in this transformation. Mahler's achievement is by no means so conclusive or original as that of his successor, Arnold Schoenberg. But without Mahler, Schoenberg would hardly have been possible.

Mahler, without completely giving up the use of music as a vehicle of ideas, nevertheless moved away from the directly representational or literary. Mahler lived in the world of philosophy, and his music expresses an obsession with the dualism of mind and matter, a generalized pessimism about earthly life, and a redeeming confidence in the hereafter; the greater abstractness of Mahler's music derives from the removal of the ideas expressed from the plane of literary and sentimental conceits to the more "spiritual" plane of abstract philosophy.

Mahler tied together for the first time many of the loose ends of the late 19th century—the technical vagaries of the romantics, the dilemma of modern man and the escape mechanism of the romantic fantasy, man's courageous posturings and his boundless despair. He remained a romantic, but he brought romanticism to its culmination and wrote *finis*.

For Schumann, the symphony had become the tone poem, for Debussy it ceased to exist altogether. Mahler attached himself almost exclusively to symphonic writing, abjuring the operas and tone poems of the romantics. He preserved the symphony, but made it "heretical." Brahms, too, had recognized the value of the symphony. But Brahms tried to rehabilitate the symphony by a reversion to earlier ideals, without making use of the gains of romanticism. Mahler incorporates in his symphonies many of the technical advances of romanticism, without violating the symphonic concept. It is a common error to attribute to Anton Bruckner the first integration of the Wagnerian harmonic expansion into the symphonic form; what Bruckner accomplished was merely the mechanical transplantation into orchestral writing of Wagner's technique of musical blocks, without assimilating it to symphonic —i.e. primarily abstract, constructivist—musical thinking. It was Mahler who was the first to understand how to subject the large Wagnerian harmonic effusion to symphonic ends in an organic fashion.

Wagner had driven tonality to its limits, and it had become necessary either to break away from tonality altogether, as Schoenberg was to do later, or to delimit it artificially so as not to destroy the conventional formal figures of the symphonic structure. Mahler's was the latter course, and he was able thereby to free his music from the mosaic technique of musical motifs as practiced by the romantics, without being driven to the creation of a full musical revolution. He reintroduced instead the more expansive, classical line, and by devising novel contrapuntal ideas he anchored the harmonic vastness of romanticism to the heart of the symphonic form, and thus showed the way towards a more intricate polyphonic concept, an idea that seemed to have been abandoned since Beethoven.

But from this attempt—in many ways a heroic one—to reconcile the classical symphonic form with the semi-literary ideal of romanticism, arise the many faults characteristic of Mahler's music: emphatic overstatement; tremendous length and loquaciousness; confusion arising from the attempt to manipulate romantic material within a relatively abstract framework; thematic banality; efforts at popularization, to make the complicated abstract structure more acceptable to listeners reared in the conventions of easy melodiousness; a straining to base the composer's radical innovations on tradition. But while Mahler may not have created a single perfect work, he remains one of the most significant musical forces of the second half of the 19th century. He was not one of music's giants, but only such a man as he, with his particular personal and artistic experience, could have helped to shape the future of music so decisively.

Gustav Mahler was born in 1860, the son of a small storekeeper in Kalischt, a little Bohemian town. The family soon moved to Iglau, another Bohemian town where the child grew up near a military barracks, hearing daily the incessant sound of the bugle calls. Mahler's biographers make much of this fact, tracing some of his sardonic thematic material to the reveille and retreat calls of the buglers. As was usual then in even the poorest Jewish families, Mahler received early instruction on the piano. When he was fifteen, his father sent him to the Vienna Conservatory, where he first came to know the music of Wagner and

Bruckner, influences that remained enormously important for him, though he soon passed beyond the stage of imitation.

Mahler's early compositions are lost, but we know that he composed prodigiously at a very early age. The first works we know are songs—the cycle *Songs of a Wayfarer* was written in 1884—followed by the First Symphony in 1888. After this latter date, Mahler embarked on composition seriously, but he had to devote most of his time to earning a living as a conductor, and his total output remained small: nine symphonies, parts of a tenth, the symphonic cycle *Das Lied von der Erde,* two more song cycles, and a few individual songs.

Whether Mahler might have given the world much more music if necessity had not made him a conductor, it is meaningless to speculate. Certainly his work as a conductor was not wasted: as a concert conductor, and especially as a reformer of opera performance, he did much to oppose the general slothfulness of most performers of his time, and to revive respect for tradition and a sense of musical values. We have Mahler to thank for many of the virtues of modern operatic and concert performance.

Although Mahler encountered frequent opposition to his strict demands on those who performed for him, his fame as a conductor spread rapidly after his first apprentice years in Hall (Austria), Laibach (in today's Yugoslavia), and Olmuetz (Bohemia). His engagements took him to several German provincial towns, and by the age of twenty-eight he had reached the first climax of his career, becoming director of the Budapest Opera House. After three years he resigned to accept a conductorship in Hamburg, where he stayed for another six years. In 1897 he took over the coveted post of director of the Vienna State Opera House, and in the ten years between 1897 and 1907 he completely reformed the Vienna opera, making it one of the foremost organizations in Europe—this despite the intrigues and anti-Semitic attacks organized against him by Viennese bureaucrats and a number of resentful artists. But in the end Mahler became weary of the intrigues of musical life in Vienna, and in 1907 he went to America, where he conducted at the Metropolitan Opera House and the New York Philharmonic from 1907 to 1911.

But here again the strain of concert life was too much for him; he was already suffering from a minor heart ailment, and on his return to Europe early in 1911 he was more seriously stricken. His wife, Alma Maria Schindler, whom he had married in 1902, managed to bring him back to Vienna, and there he died on May 19, 1911. So great was his reputation as a conductor and so limited his fame as a composer that the general public at first mourned only the passing of a great performer.

MAHLER's life-span covered perhaps the calmest years in all known history. During his sixth year the Seven Weeks' War between Prussia and Austria was fought, to leave hardly any mark upon the milieu in which he grew up; and when he died the Balkan War of 1912 was still one year away. In the forty-five years between these two wars tranquillity reigned, and those inhabitants of Europe who possessed the financial means lived in unexampled security and comfort. Moreover, by the time Mahler was born the equal status of Jews in Austria, proclaimed by law in 1781, had become more or less an actuality.

But this peace did not have deep roots. The Hapsburgs had chronic difficulties in ruling the many nationalities living under what then seemed to be a stern regime. Mahler himself was mainly affected by the national difficulties of the Czechs. As a middle-class Jew he belonged culturally to the German sphere, but because of his Bohemian origin he was often treated by the Austrian bureaucracy as one of the despised Czechs. (Once Mahler said, "I am a threefold expatriate—a Czech among Austrians, an Austrian among Germans, and a Jew in the whole world.")

Nor were the complications of nationality the only difficulties that troubled the Hapsburg empire. A powerful labor movement, struggling for independent expression, had come into existence in the late 19th century to threaten not only the throne, but the very existence of the imperial state itself. Yet the intelligentsia of the empire were only half aware of all this, and what awareness they had simply created in them a negative attitude towards social and political matters in general—an attitude particularly marked among the Jewish intelligentsia.

Granted, the Viennese Jew had come a long way from the time he was shut up in a ghetto on a small island between the Danube canal and the Danube, and had to live by usury or petty trade. But though ostensibly admitted into society with full rights, he encountered all those hidden barriers that today still make up the anti-Semitism of the "enlightened" strata of society. Emancipated or not, he was still excluded from high governmental positions, and in a country where all cultural posts had civil service status, such a situation was particularly difficult for the Jew who wished to escape the confines of petty-bourgeois life. Thus, those who aspired to distinction in science or art approached life with an even deeper pessimism than that which characterized the Austrian intelligentsia in general—a pessimism revealing itself, among other ways, in an almost oversensitive reverence for philosophers like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

Nietzsche in particular was Mahler's idol in his early years—that same Nietzsche who had spoken Mahler's own thoughts when he said, "Two hundred days of every year are pure pain." But Mahler was not influenced by Nietzsche's pessimism alone: the tendency that had led to Nietzsche's complete reversal of position in 1877, when in *Menschliches Allzumenschliches* he denounced pessimism, attacked Wagner and Schopenhauer, and praised Offenbach, led Mahler, too, to accept simultaneously negativism and optimism. In Nietzsche this reversal was caused primarily by his hatred for the state and its officialdom, both of which came for him to be symbolized in Wagner, whom he called "the Papist." With Mahler the feeling was not so much political as metaphysical: he made for himself a kind of rough amalgam combining the deep pessimism of Schopenhauer with the new optimism of Nietzsche, a mixture that constituted his own peculiar approach—and was perhaps the result fundamentally of his experiences as a Jew in a society that at no point either accepted or rejected him wholly. Mahler's pessimism, unlike Schopenhauer's, was never skeptical and never rationalistic. The roots of his philosophy lay not in intellectual processes but in an emotional doubt and insecurity which was to possess him even more strongly in later years, when, as director of the Vienna Opera House, he became the target of the intrigues of anti-Semitic bureaucrats.

HE WAS, as he said himself, a "summer composer"; his strenuous activity on the podium prevented him from composing during the season. But even so he managed in his "spare time"—his summers away from the bustle of the theater—to write a great deal of music which, if not universally acclaimed, at least won him many ardent disciples and admirers among those circles of the younger intelligentsia he wanted most to reach. In its outward circumstances his life seemed very successful; few other composers have had such an easy and flourishing career. And no other composer, with the possible exception of Richard Strauss, could boast of having enjoyed in his own lifetime great fame along with high material rewards.

But behind this outer picture of serenity was an inner personality which to many who caught glimpses of it seemed obscure and puzzling. Bruno Walter, in his book on Mahler, tells how the composer once was gripped suddenly by terrifying fright, imagining he saw the shadow of an eagle about to pounce on him. When he was only nineteen, he wrote the most resigned and melancholy letters: "O, my loved earth, when O when will you accept the deserted man into your lap? Look! Men have rejected him and he flees their cold, heartless bosom to come to you, to you! O, accept the lonely one, the restless one, all-eternal mother!"

Such pessimism is not new. But in Mahler it is both the traditional pessimism of the baroque and the peculiar despair of the modern, and hand in hand with it there went the positive hope of a better, healthier life in the beyond, a life that became finally the only important one for him. Out of the Nietzschean mixture of pessimism and optimism, reinforced by the influence of Schopenhauer, who in his borrowings from Buddhism combined the skeptical with the affirmative, Mahler made for himself a mood of combined depression and exuberance, perhaps his only answer to the social anti-Semitism he experienced so frequently.

It is remarkable, by the way, that before the advent of Hitler none of Mahler's biographers felt it necessary to discuss the anti-Semitic attacks he was subjected to for so many years. It was the reverse of the universalist medal: since it was not important that he was a Jew, it was also not important that he was attacked as a Jew. Only after 1933 do the biographers—notably the composer's widow—begin to see the Jewish strain in Mahler's personality and work.

Eventually Mahler found his peace in Catholicism, the religion offering the most definite assurance that life on earth is only a preparation for life in the beyond. This fact, which has been made much of by his enemies, supplied an additional reason for his biographers' habitual suppression of the Jewish "issue." Baptism in old Austria was a revocable passport to higher honors, and it is easy to accuse Mahler of sheer opportunism; but this is to misunderstand his character and the trend of the times. Catholicism of an ascetic tendency had assumed a "progressive" appearance as a kind of symbolic answer to the dogmatic yet lavish court of Francis Joseph; the pretender to the throne, Francis Ferdinand, young nephew of Francis Joseph, was an ardent and ascetic Catholic, and he rallied around him many younger intellectuals who, half-consciously dissatisfied with the state of affairs yet not endowed with sufficient political insight to place their hopes on the only opposition to the *status quo* that had reality—namely, the labor movement—saw their one chance in the spiritual and political aspirations of this prince. Many gifted young Jews followed him blindly and accepted his faith as their own, for idealistic rather than religious reasons. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Adolf Loos, Karl Kraus, to name only a few, were among them. Was it so strange, then, that a man like Mahler, deeply conscious of his need of a connection with the world of the German spirit—if only for the sake of his art—should join this general tendency?

Mahler's eventual rejection of life on earth was actually a form of heterodoxy, since it implied that this world was created by evil. As a Manichean heretic, Mahler was less concerned with the devotional than with the ideological aspects of Catholicism. He found spiritual guidance not in the prayer book or the ritual, but in a book by a famous German psychologist, Gustav Theodor Fechner, called *Das Buechlein vom Leben nach dem Tode,* a metaphysical excursion arguing that birth is but a change from one life to another. Inspired by this idea, Mahler became convinced that his music was an anticipation of the life to come. Suddenly his art shifts from the aesthetic to the purposeful; he sees himself as a visionary rather than an artist. He begins to attribute magical qualities to his music—"I am afraid people will commit suicide after hearing this work," Mahler is reported to have said of one of his later symphonies. This sort of thinking provides Mahler with a new source of inspiration, and—as if by a dialectical conversion—the abstractness of "pure music" is achieved by the sheer overstatement of esoteric ideas couched in a musical texture of great physical directness.

PERHAPS this abstractness, too, may have been in part a consequence of Mahler's Jewishness. Forbidden to depict God as a living thing in figurative art, Jews had acquired the capacity to think, feel, and express the abstract. But, like other peoples, they still had to resort to some concrete form for their leading ideas, and thus, while God could not be represented pictorially, he still existed in the imagination as something materially existent: the flaming thornbush, in which God is symbolized by flame—a thing at once immaterial and real—is the best-known example of this conception. And it may have been something similar that made Mahler see in all art a purpose beyond itself; acting on this belief, he achieved, paradoxically again, a result embodying the utmost aesthetic purity.

Philosophically, his music is representational, aesthetically it is abstract. Almost against his will, one might say, his works were fated to remain purely symphonic, despite occasional programmatic implications and even despite his frequent use of texts. "All music since Beethoven has been program music," was one of Mahler's favorite maxims. Yet of his own music he said: "Mood music is dangerous ground. For the time being everything remains as it was: themes—clear and plastic so that they can be recognized in each guise and development—and then a varying development and primarily a logical evolution of the inner idea." This, of course, is the very opposite of programmatic music. And all his programmatic implications—the titles of his Third, the sledge hammer in his Sixth, the words in his Second, Fourth, and Eighth symphonies—are but the result of a felt need to clarify the abstractness of his music for the inexperienced listener. And perhaps, after all, he really knew how far his art was removed from the representational: the greatest opera conductor and director on the German stage, he never tried his hand at an opera or any other expressly representational work.

Mahler was not a modern composer in the revolutionary sense. As a Jew of his particular period, he had to spend too much time and energy entrenching himself in traditional culture to permit him to accomplish any radical break. Nevertheless, he was by far the most advanced symphonic composer of his generation insofar as he did the most to break out of the blind alley of romantic music.

His yearning for integration with German culture, especially its romantic aspect, is well revealed in some poems he wrote which are amazingly similar to those in the famous collection of German romantic poems called *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Yet Mahler wrote them before he ever knew of this book. His music was pervaded by the romantic devices and allusions used by German composers ever since Schubert, yet his feeling of not belonging in their world and his resulting pessimism made him reject the basic aesthetic of romanticism. It was thus that, while seeming to stay within the romantic style, he was able to free himself from so much that had become sterile in it.

Mahler also repeatedly employed such devices of liturgical music as chorales, etc. Yet he converted these devices, too, into forms of musical expression that went beyond the institutional ideas of the Church—just as Beethoven, who had no personal inclination towards religion, had done with similar devices. Consequently, the threefold expatriate Mahler was able to accomplish what the Catholic Anton Bruckner had attempted in vain ever since his Fourth Symphony in 1874. Bruckner, staying within the narrow national boundaries of Austria, employed peasant dances and the clichés of church music, its organ points, chorales, and *ostinati* as he had learned them during his days as an organist; but the Jew Mahler, thirsting for culture and essentially a cosmopolitan intellectual, lifted his music beyond nationalism. In the history of music, only those works that are truly cosmopolitan make a decisive mark in the end.

IT IS true that Mahler's combination of romanticism and religiosity did seduce him into forms with such broad contours that the usual symphony, whose formal essence lies in a tightly knit structure, was extended into absurdity. But this structural elephantiasis was mitigated to some degree by Mahler's pessimistic questioning of romanticism: the walking basses that appear again and again to give the listener a feeling of indefinable horror; the *ostinati*, ever recurring motifs emphasizing senselessness in their lack of musical evolution; the barbaric marches, written a long time before Stravinsky; the banalities of the thematic inventions and the almost literal quotations from composers as diverse as Mozart, Schubert, and Bruckner—all these negate almost every effort at grandioseness. Curiously, Mahler's frequent banality and his stylistic parodies, often amounting to actual plagiarisms and attacked repeatedly by the critics, do not point to any lack of inventiveness; their real function is but to emphasize the composer's inviolate dependence upon the music of the past, while at the same time, by making the traditional melody and folk song over-obvious, they mock all attempts to recreate the past. Thus Mahler will introduce a traditional melody in the usual manner, only to continue it against a group of distorted woodwinds. Or he will depart from the traditional key in a manner that immediately impresses one as grotesque. He wrote imitations of *Laendler*—Austrian folk dances—and, by the use of a contermelody played on an out-of-tune violin, lifted these uninspired tunes to an entirely different plane. He never makes a definitely traditional or a grandiose statement without taking it back the next moment; in this he resembles such Jewish writers as Heine, Meyrinck, and Kafka.

Nevertheless, Mahler's austerity sometimes fails him; a rather shallow worldliness frequently broke through his burlesquing and he did not hesitate to display popularizing tendencies. In such music his banalities are no longer satiric in function, but are planned as valid melodies; the voices follow the natural cadence of the sentence structure, and the popular appeal is intentional. This is perhaps Mahler's one great weakness. And yet his music is never really gay. It is often biting, laughing, and sardonic, as Jewish humor has been through the ages, but it is never merry. Where Richard Strauss could write a serene ballad about the jester Tyll Eulenspiegel, Mahler's music is Eulenspiegel in deadly earnest.

MAHLER's Jewishness appears also in more obvious ways: extraverted emotionalism even in the most philosophical passages; a great amount of self-pity, as in the *triste* passages in *Das Lied von der Erde,* set to the words *"Mir war auf dieser Welt das Glueck nicht hold"* ("Luck did not smile on me in this world"); the frequent use of Slavic melodies and modal devices in which the fourth interval plays an increasingly important role—laughter through tears.

Certain technical devices might also be related to Mahler's Jewishness—mainly the substitution of the revolutionary fourth interval for the traditional third, and the constant vacillation between major and minor keys, both devices perhaps expressive of a certain vacillation between the Eastern and Western musical traditions. Such devices proved most important for the development of modern music under Schoenberg. Mahler's loosening of the traditional structure of tonality—most noticeable in his later works—in turn necessitated wider melodic intervals, increasing use of dissonance (also partly determined by literary reasons, for "descriptions" of catastrophic climaxes), and a great deal of mere rhetoric such as had until then never been known in symphonic writing. All these effects indicated the end of academic music and went to compose the foundation upon which the young Schoenberg was able to build his own new music.

Mahler's music was neglected in the beginning because it departed too sharply from the conventional and was not understood. As the years passed, it was performed less and less often, until only a small circle of modernist musicians remained aware of its greatness. Today it is still neglected—and perhaps the general failure to understand the nature of modern music may be caused in no small measure by public unfamiliarity with the work of the genius who brought the new life and meaning that created it. The recent "renaissance" of interest in Mahler's music, although still within most modest dimensions, may be the first real indication that modern music is on the way to its rightful place in the concert repertory.

# THE LAST DAYS OF JEWISH SALONICA

## *What Happened to a 450-Year-Old Civilization*

### CECIL ROTH

THE fate of the Jews of Salonica at the hands of the Nazis is an episode of recent history that for some reason or other has been relatively overlooked. Yet, even in recent history, there are few stories more terrible.

On the eve of World War II, Salonica, Greece's third largest city, had a Jewish population of some 50,000 in a total of 240,000; compared to the past, this represented a sharp decline for what was traditionally a Jewish city. The ancient intellectual preeminence had also waned somewhat. But Salonica was still the greatest center of Sephardic Jewry, with its synagogues and academies, its rabbis and its teachers, its newspapers and its printing presses, and some scholars of distinction among the sixty rabbis and communal functionaries. Moreover, the city was still a happy hunting ground for Spanish philologists and scholars, anxious to trace, in the speech of the descendants of the exiles of 1492, the authentic accent and folklore of 15th-century Castile; and the old folk still paraded along the quayside on a Sabbath afternoon in medieval Spanish costume.

Economically, the Jewish community was well balanced. Certainly, there was here no excessive proportion of professional men. (Indeed, the number was so low that the community officially employed non-Jewish physicians.) There were now no great fortunes. There were many petty shopkeepers; but the bulk of the community were, as their ancestors had been, peddlers, craftsmen, and manual laborers. Whatever bogey of Jewish "influence" and "infiltration" could be erected by German anti-Semitism elsewhere in Europe, it had no relevance whatsoever in the case of Salonica's old-established, picturesque, hard-working Jewish masses. Yet this fact did not save them.

The account that follows—the first detailed report in the English language, I believe—is based in part on reports received by the writer in the course of a visit to Greece not long after liberation, in part on the invaluable material assembled by M. Michael Molho, the sole surviving spiritual leader of Salonican Jewry, in a touching work, *In Memoriam,* which he has devoted to this subject.

WHEN Paul of Tarsus visited Salonica, in the year 50 CE, he found there a strong Jewish community with its synagogue, in which, we are informed, he preached for three Sabbaths in succession. The community's history may already have gone back some generations; afterwards, certainly, it was uninterrupted down to modern times.

The Turks were soldiers and peasants, uninterested in trade and inexpert in handicrafts. The Jews were merchants and craftsmen, long excluded from the land and inexpert in war. Hence the two peoples were in a sense complementary; and when the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 the Sultan tolerantly opened the gates of his empire to them. Most of them settled naturally in the seaports; and above all in Salonica, which from this time onwards was one of Europe's greatest Jewish communities—for a time, indeed, the greatest. It was a microcosm of the Jewish world. There were refugees from France, Italy, Germany, Hungary,

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CECIL ROTH, historian and Jewish scholar, here tells the final terrifying chapter in the Nazi destruction of Salonican Jewry—a community of some fifty thousand Sephardic Jews. Dr. Roth has written widely on Jewish subjects; his most recent work, *A History of the Jews in England,* was published in 1941. He was born in London in 1899 and studied at Oxford, where he later became a reader in post-Biblical Jewish studies. He has frequently lectured in America.

Calabria, Apulia, Sicily, and every province and city of Spain, each group maintaining its own synagogue and congregation.

For a while the Jews were probably a majority of the population. They not only controlled trade and industry, but also provided the artisans, the fishermen, the stevedores, and the harbor workers (almost down to our own day no ship could unload in the port on the Sabbath). The fashions, the habits, the dishes, the languages, the costumes, and even the lullabies of Toledo and Seville, as they had existed in the age of Ferdinand and Isabella, were incongruously perpetuated, generation after generation. Indeed, it has been said that could Columbus have returned to this earth four centuries after his momentous voyage, he would have found himself more at home in Salonica than in Palos. Every synagogue had its academy attached to it, and for many generations the city was one of the world's centers of rabbinic learning.

Down to the beginning of the 20th century, the picture remained almost unchanged. The community had suffered great material losses, indeed, in periodic conflagrations, and even greater spiritual disillusionment in the 17th century when it pinned over-great hopes on the false messiah of Smyrna, Sabbatai Zevi (whose secret votaries, the Domneh, posing as Moslems, were still numerous and influential in Salonica until a few years ago). But Salonica remained largely a Jewish city, having in 1912, at the close of the period of Turkish rule, a Jewish population of over 80,000 (excluding the Domneh) out of a total of 173,000. The great fire of 1917 during World War I destroyed their ancient quarter and left 50,000 of them homeless; economic instability, inflation, anti-Semitic agitation in the following years caused a considerable emigration, mostly to France, Palestine, and Latin America; the exchanges of population between Greece and Turkey brought about a rapid artificial expansion of the Greek population (hitherto a minority), and a forced process of Hellenization. But life remained at least tolerable when it was not actually pleasant.

On April 9, 1941, at about nine o'clock in the morning, the first German armed columns entered Salonica. Two days later, the *Messagero*—the sole surviving Judeo-Spanish daily paper—was suppressed, and a number of houses and public buildings were requisitioned for military needs, including the Jewish hospital founded by Baron de Hirsch and bearing his name. On April 15, the communal council was arrested and its offices raided. In the course of the following week, placards forbidding entrance to Jews began to make their appearance in the cafés, and later on all Jews were ordered to give up their radios.

Meanwhile, a new quisling newspaper had begun to make its appearance, the "New Europe" (*Néa Evropi*), which devoted a great deal of its space to anti-Semitic propaganda in the full Goebbels style. But, clearly, everything was going to be done in an orderly fashion. The Germans even nominated a new president of the community to transmit their orders; and when the *soi-disant* Prime Minister, General Tsolacoglou, visited the city, he gave comforting reassurances to a Jewish deputation which waited on him.

For over a year no specific anti-Jewish regulations were applied. There were occasional cases of assault, Jews were arrested or even executed on other charges (e.g., of Communism, after the invasion of Russia), and there was terrible economic distress. But nothing was done against the Jewish community as such; and a false sense of security had begun to spread.

The beginning of the persecution was in a disguised form, as was the Nazi practice. It came in the summer of 1942 on Saturday, July 11, when orders were issued for all adult male Jews between the ages of eighteen and forty-five to present themselves to be enrolled for forced labor at Liberty Square, where in 1908 the Young Turks had proclaimed the new regime for all the peoples of the Ottoman Empire. Here they were kept, packed together under the broiling sun, until the afternoon, surrounded by companies of soldiers armed with machine guns, the slightest movement being savagely punished. Many were sent off immediately to malaria-stricken areas where they worked in the sun ten hours a day, with inadequate rations. Within ten weeks, 12 per cent of those taken had died.

Ultimately, after prolonged negotiations, the Germans agreed to exempt the Jews from forced labor in return for a ransom of two and a half billion drachmae, equivalent to about 40,000 US gold dollars. The bulk of the sum was raised, with enormous difficulty. It seemed that the community was saved.

However, there were in the following months more and more expropriations and seizures of Jewish businesses, warehouses, and property. This culminated when, in December 1942, the ancient cemetery, containing nearly half a million graves and dating back certainly to the 15th century, was expropriated and thus became a quarry for the entire city; tombstones of inestimable historic value, as well as those erected by persons still alive, were removed regardless of age or associations, and can still be seen all over the city used as paving stones, or even to line latrines.

Throughout Europe, the Nazi authorities showed a somewhat paradoxical interest in Jewish libraries, intellectual treasures, and ritual objects: partly because what was valuable could be sold (even if it first had to be melted down), partly because they were engaged in building up at Frankfort, for anti-Semitic purposes, what was rapidly becoming the world's greatest Jewish research library. The ancient fame of Salonica attracted special attention; and not long after the German occupation a section of the Kommando Rosenberg, which supervised this important matter, installed itself in the former American consulate, its work being under the direction of a not incompetent scholar, Dr. J. Pohl, director of the Hebrew section of the Frankfort Institute. All the libraries and synagogues of Salonica were now raided and their treasures seized, packed, and dispatched northward by these perverted collectors. (It is even said that they included in their number expert forgers, who introduced material for anti-Jewish libels in their booty whenever it was possible.) It was noticed that some of these "experts" looked at everything from the point of view of German history. They were making frenzied inquiries into the exact position of the ghetto that they assumed had once existed in Salonica, and seemed disappointed when they discovered that in this quasi-Jewish city, which had formed part of the tolerant Turkish Empire, there had never been (and indeed could not have been) anything of the sort. Why this exaggerated antiquarian interest? The reason was very soon to become apparent.

At this stage, the puppet-president of the community, whom the Germans had nominated when they first arrived, was removed from office and replaced by the rabbi, Dr. Koretz. It is necessary to devote a few lines to this unhappy figure. He was not a Salonican in origin. The community, feeling the need for a rabbi of Western education, one who could better represent them vis-à-vis their fellow citizens and the government, had appointed this Eastern European Ashkenazi, trained in a German rabbinical seminary, to the post, which he had filled not without dignity for a number of years. Regarding Germany with the fundamental deference that was once universal among Eastern European Jews; brought up in that country, and imbued with veneration for its intellectual achievement; speaking German, and thus able to enter into personal contact with the occupying authorities—he was unable to believe the worst of them and had tended from the first to temporize. He became convinced that by unquestioning compliance the Nazis' resentment (he did not realize that it was in fact an implacable hatred) might be mollified. Now, in his double capacity, both as rabbi and as president, he not only carried out every German instruction but also urged his community to obey implicitly.

It is on this policy that the few surviving Salonican Jews put the blame for the fact that the disaster which burst upon them was so overwhelming and universal and that so few escaped. Some of them go so far in their bitterness as to accuse Koretz of having been in effect a German agent. It certainly seems that he displayed not only a deplorable weakness but also a degree of compliance that, in the circumstances, verged upon treachery. In due course, his work was seconded by a local Jew, of the lowest origin, named Vital Hasson. About the latter's function there was no doubt; he was a traitor and quisling interested only in the satisfaction of his own greeds and vices.

By the beginning of 1943, the mechanism had been prepared and all the preliminaries finished. The time had now arrived for the acceleration of the persecution. In the course of six months, between February and August of that year, Salonican Jewry met its doom.

On February 6 a commission headed by Dieter Wisliceny and Aloïs Brünner arrived in Salonica to put the racial laws into operation. The same day an order was drawn up (it was issued two days later) imposing the supreme indignities that had already become the rule elsewhere in Nazi-dominated Europe. All Jews were henceforth to wear a special distinguishing badge, of yellow color, in the shape of the Star of David—their shops and offices also had to be similarly marked. A special ghetto quarter was to be set up, in which all Jews were to be concentrated. Within a few days, further regulations were issued elaborating these instructions and indicating, in the spirit of the Nuremberg Laws, precisely what was necessary in order to qualify a person as a Jew and subject him to these restrictions. One hundred thousand yellow badges were manufactured, at top speed, so that every Jew of either sex, from the age of five upwards, could have one on his overcoat as well as on his ordinary clothing; each bore a distinctive number which corresponded with that on his special registration card. Within a few days, the Salonican Jews were marked off like pariahs.

No single Jewish quarter was set up (that was impossible in view of the circumstances) but a number of areas were marked off in those districts which were largely inhabited by Jews. The space assigned was nevertheless hopelessly inadequate, four or six families often being crowded together in accommodations suited only for one. Any Jew who changed his residence without permission was treated as a deserter and shot outright. No Jew was allowed in the public streets after nightfall; no Jew was allowed to use the telephone; no Jew could ride on the tramway or any other sort of conveyance.

Camouflaging their intent, the authorities maintained the pretext that the new sytem would facilitate the reorganization of the Jewish community on quasi-autonomous lines, independent of the city as such. There was to be a Jewish mayor and Jewish chamber of commerce; and a Jewish police force was organized in order to maintain order. But the real object of the new provisions (which Rabbi Koretz had obediently proclaimed to his flock, from the pulpit of the synagogue) gradually emerged. If the Jews were isolated, they could be despoiled with greater ease; and having been despoiled, they could be exterminated. Simultaneously with the creation of the ghettos, a detailed inquiry was ordered into all the property of every sort in Jewish hands, including even domestic animals and household furniture. The reason soon became clear.

On March 13, a proclamation was issued placing upon the Jewish community the duty of administering all Jewish property, except household goods and other articles of the most simple description. Everything possible was to be transformed with all speed into cash, which was to be deposited in the banks in a collective credit; and upwards of one hundred communal notables were designated as hostages to insure that these and all the other instructions were punctually obeyed. This in effect signified utter spoliation, under a mildly euphemistic title.

One of the finest villas in Salonica, in Velissariou Street, had already been taken over as the headquarters of the Commission for Jewish Affairs; and this, its floors strewn with priceless stolen carpets and its cellars filled with accumulated stolen treasures, became the scene of sadistic tortures by day and bacchanalian revelries by night. Hitherto, Jews had been restricted to the ghetto areas only by night. They were now forbidden to leave them even by day. There was no longer any question of these districts being autonomous units; they were obviously intended only as prisons or condemned cells, pending the execution of sentence.

Some half-century before, the charitable Baron de Hirsch had paid for the construction near the railway station of a number of little houses, to give shelter to Jewish refugees from the Russian pogroms. This was to be the scene of the final tragedy. While the ghetto legislation was being perfected and enforced, this district, which had a population of something less than 2,500 souls massed together in 593 rooms, was being divided off from the rest of the city—not by the usual barbed wire, but by a fence of high planks. There were three entrances, each surmounted by a trilingual inscription, in German, Greek, and Ladino; and outside, searchlights and machine guns were installed. It was thus a ghetto in a fuller sense than the other newly designated Jewish quarters. But its function was to be even more sinister than this; it was to serve as the corral where the human cattle were to be rounded up at the last, before being taken to the slaughter. Three hundred empty railway wagons were known to be lined up on the sidings, awaiting the victims.

On the morning of Sunday, March 14, the inhabitants of the Hirsch quarter were instructed to assemble in the local synagogue, where they were informed by Rabbi Koretz that they were to be deported to Poland. With what was, at the most charitable interpretation, an unbelievable naivety, he informed them that they would find a new home there, among their own people; the great Jewish community of Cracow (could he have been unaware that Cracow Jewry had already been destroyed?) would receive them as brothers, and each man would find employment in accordance with his aptitude and experience. To give some verisimilitude to the farce, some Polish paper money was made available to the victims; they were of course forbidden to take with them any gold or silver or anything else of value, or more than twenty kilograms of personal property done up in bundles (valises were not allowed).

The next morning, the inhabitants of the quarter were assembled and marched to the station, where they were driven into the waiting cars, which were soon overladen to twice their capacity, closed, and then sealed. Soon the cargo of human misery began its journey to the Polish slaughterhouse. Four hundred and fifty-one years before, their ancestors had been the victims of one of the greatest tragedies in the history of medieval Europe when they had been driven out of Spain, hoping in vain for a miracle that would save them at the last moment. Now an age had come when miracles were no longer even hoped for.

The Hirsch quarter was now clear, and ready to receive a new convoy. A few hours later the ghetto in the Aghia Paraskevi district was suddenly surrounded, and its inhabitants were ordered to be ready to leave in twenty minutes. They were then marched —aged, children, invalids, cripples—to the Hirsch quarter, where they were joined on the next day by the Jews of the district near the smaller station. On Wednesday, March 17, another convoy left for the north, under much the same conditions as before (though, to do him justice, the rabbi secured some slight alleviation). Day by day, thenceforth, these scenes repeated themselves, group after group being dispatched to the Hirsch quarter and convoy after convoy, each of some 2,800 persons, being sent off.

There was a brief interlude in the middle of March, when military requirements necessitated the recruitment of forced labor. But this did not last for long; moreover, the treatment of the laborers was so appalling that most persons preferred the alternative of deportation, many still pathetically believing the tale that they were being sent to start a new life in a distant region. Indeed, such are the unfathomable resources of human optimism that there was a veritable epidemic of marriages at this time, even in the Hirsch quarter itself. On the eve of deportation, as many as a hundred young couples would be married on a single day, here or in the other ghettos, with the pathetically incongruous traditional formula in which praise is offered to the God who created man in his own image, who makes the bridegroom to rejoice in his bride, and who will speedily cause the streets of Jerusalem to resound to the happy voice of youths and maidens newly joined in wedlock.

Few details are known as to what happened to the deportees in the course of their tragic journey northwards. But their fate was in all cases the same. The talk of sending them to start a fresh life in Poland was nothing but mockery; by this time no Jew survived in Cracow, which was supposed to be their destination. The trains were directed one after the other to the great annihilation camps of Oswiecim (Auschwitz) and the adjacent Brzezinka (Birkenau) in Poland, where more than 1,750,000 Jews from various countries were murdered during this period (this is in addition to the 1,500,000 who were murdered in Maidanek). Here, far away from their sunny home, the Salonican Jews were exterminated. The number of survivors who escaped by flight or by some other means* was infinitesimal.

It is to be reported, with the most profound regret, that the general population of Salonica did not show that degree of practical sympathy with their harried fellow townsfolk which was encountered in some other cities, and many did not shun a profit from the Jewish distress. On the other hand, there were some among them, if not many, who did what they could to help, even at the risk of their lives, and it was to them that most of the tiny handful of survivors owed their escape. This was the case especially, it may be remarked, in the surrounding countryside, where the Germans applied the same regime as in the city itself. Out of thirty-three Jews at a little place named Aicatherine, for example, all except three who had been shot were able to take refuge in the neighborhood villages, disguised as peasants. On a far larger scale was the help given by the Italian authorities, both military and civil, who, true to their finest and happiest tradition, refused to collaborate with their German allies and did everything that they could to help Jews escape by giving them false papers of nationality, sending them away in military convoys, or declaring them members of their own families. On the other hand, the Bulgarians, who indeed refused to collaborate in any excesses of anti-Semitism in their own country, had no such scruples in the portions of Greece which they occupied. Here, the annihilation of the Jews was almost complete, rising to 96 per cent, 98 per cent, and even (as at Xanthiex, where there were only six survivors out of a community of 550) 99 per cent.

From March 15 onwards, there were only the briefest interruptions in the deportations. Further convoys, each of the regulation size, left the Salonica railway station at intervals of two or three days in the second half of March; nine in April; and two at the beginning of May, these including persons who had been rounded up in other cities of Macedonia where there were Jewish communities, such as Florina, Demotica, and Verria. The ghetto police force, of which the Germans had made considerable use for enforcing their orders, was now superfluous, and its members, who no doubt had hoped for preferential treatment, were sent to join their coreligionists. The most despicable figure of all, Vital Hasson, suffered from no illusion, and fled in good time, to be rounded up and condemned to death, however, after the German defeat (though the execution of the sentence was inexplicably delayed). Certain persons, whose services had been used by the Germans for purposes of communal organization and discipline, were dispatched, as they were informed, to the relatively favored fortress-ghetto of Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia, where a good number of Jews in fact

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***In Italy in 1945, and in the Balkans in 1946, I met Salonican Jews, their wrists tattooed with their prison-camp numbers and still in their eyes looks of horror which would never pass away; they owed their lives to the fact that they had been employed to stoke the furnaces of the crematoria.**

survived; but they too ended in the crematoria. At the end of June, those Jews who were of Italian nationality were sent to Athens, though after the fall of Mussolini they were rounded up and deported; those who, owing to the romantic Judeophilism of the Spanish government before Franco, could claim Spanish protection, but were not wanted in Spain, went to Bergen-Belsen; a number ultimately managed, however, to get to Casablanca or even to a new life in Tel Aviv.

Of the Salonican community, there were left now only the survivors of those who had been sent to forced labor. They were now rounded up, malaria-stricken, emaciated, and half naked, and on August 7 they too were deported, to the number of 1,200. This was the nineteenth convoy. It was also the last; for there were no more Jews left.

All told, there had been deported from Salonica in these few months (the exact figures are available) 46,091 Jews, of whom approximately 44,000 were natives of the city and the remainder from the surrounding countryside and neighboring towns. Of these, 45,650 were sent directly to Poland where they were exterminated; the remaining handful went to Bergen-Belsen, where some of them survived—including Rabbi Koretz, who, however, died, perhaps fortunately for himself, on the morrow of liberation. Of the 5,000 Salonican Jews not deported, many had already succumbed to their sufferings in forced labor; others had found refuge in the surrounding countryside or else in Athens where (largely owing to the noble lead of the Patriarch Damascenos, who, alas, had no imitator in Salonica) a goodly proportion of the Jews were saved by the complicity of the Christian population.

In October 1944, Salonica was recaptured by the Greek and Allied forces. A handful of Jews drifted back in due course to the city whose history had been intertwined so closely with their own for two thousand years. They found their homes occupied, their property looted, all but two or three out of their nineteen synagogues destroyed, their five-century-old cemetery still used as a quarry.

Amid the ruins, this remnant set themselves to build up their lives anew. Perhaps they may succeed in reconstituting a community, but it will be one like any other small Jewish congregation anywhere in the world. The community which once numbered nearly 50 per cent of the total city population of 173,000 is now insignificant, less than one per cent out of the present 250,000. Moreover, all that Salonican Jewry had stood for—that strange island of 15th-century Spain in a setting of 20th-century Greece—is gone forever. With it has gone, unnoticed and unlamented, the cultural environment which made the city for so long a center of interest for philologists, historians, folklorists, and lovers of the picturesque. It is not only a community that has been annihilated, but also a way of life.

In the summer of 1946 I went to Greece on behalf of the British War Office to lecture to the troops, and had the horrible experience of visiting this charnel house of historic memories. In the synagogue, on Sabbath morning, there was barely a *minyan*. There was as yet no religious education for the children. There was hardly any provision for other fundamental religious requirements. Everywhere one could see traces of loot. I found a child in the street sitting on a synagogue chair carved with a Hebrew inscription; I was given a fragment of a Sefer Torah which had been cut up as soles for a pair of shoes; I saw carts in the cemetery removing Hebrew tombstones, on the instructions of the Director of Antiquities for the province, for the repair of one of the local ancient churches.

But a Greek hawker in the street was selling eggs cooked in the traditional Sephardic sabbatical fashion, *huevos enjaminados*, now become a local delicacy. Jewish life had been all but exterminated, but this relic of the Jewish cuisine curiously survived.

# PORTRAIT OF THE INAUTHENTIC NEGRO

## *How Prejudice Distorts the Victim's Personality*

### ANATOLE BROYARD

RECENTLY, in a night club, I heard—or rather watched—a Negro entertainer do a song about racial discrimination. During the rendition he twisted his neck into the grotesque posture of a hanged man, and bit off his words in a melodramatic imitation of strangling. When he had concluded the song, and the elaborate pantomime that accompanied it, the audience, which had come to hear bebop, applauded. I didn't applaud. The performance was outrageously false—even falser than most night club performances. There was something insidiously glib and confident about it—something that went beyond mere insincerity—and the audience too was curiously complacent, almost as though they had been rehearsed. They applauded this accusing dirge exactly as they would a routine piece. Could they have failed to understand it? I studied the singer for an answer, and, at that moment, he bowed in a mannered way and smiled—*a smile of complicity*—and then I realized that it was *I* who had failed to understand the song. It was obviously a parody! His smile and their applause gave it away. It wasn't a song about discrimination as I had so naively supposed—its actual theme was the *double entendre* between singer and audience, a kind of cultish collusion by which both denied the words. The real social significance of the piece lay in its very lack of significance.

I looked around – apparently I was the only one who refused the easy offering. The audience was still grinning, and the singer was already beginning his encore, a typical crooner ballad. A moment ago a lynching, and now a supplication to his "baby"—all in the same universe of discourse, all in a day's work. A real American juxtaposition – the kind that conditions us to digest, day after day, the most poisonous kind of diet. I had an impulse to boo, but I knew better. I would be denounced as anti-Negro. Even the Negro singer would denounce me, because he sang, and they applauded, the agreement between them, an agreement not to go beyond this point, to let well enough alone. He had his act, they had their indifference.... What more did I want? What was I anyway—a troublemaker?

IN HIS "Portrait of the Inauthentic Jew" (COMMENTARY, May 1948), Jean-Paul Sartre describes as *inauthentic* the Jew who implicitly or explicitly accepts the anti-Semite's definition of the Jew, who "proves" the anti-Semite's accusations by devoting much of his efforts to guiltily dissociating himself from any semblance of Jewishness. Sartre

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IN HIS book *Anti-Semite and Jew* (published as a series of articles in COMMENTARY in the April, May, and June issues of 1948), Jean-Paul Sartre analyzed the psychological effects upon the personality and behavior of Jews of an unsympathetic surrounding world. Here ANATOLE BROYARD attempts a similar analysis of the situation of the American Negro, which he knows at first hand. To him, as to Sartre, the ultimate horror of discrimination is the victim's unconscious remolding of his own personality into something untrue to himself. At a time when social action is the accepted sovereign remedy, Mr. Broyard's doubts about the value of organized group struggle against oppression may seem highly debatable to most; and others will find his prescription of individual responsibility and self-determination strong medicine indeed. By the same token, there will be few who will not be moved by the deep sense of pain and outrage expressed here and the faith in the individual's possibilities which the writer's proposed solution manifests. Mr. Broyard was born in New Orleans in 1920, attended Brooklyn College and the New School for Social Research, and now teaches in the Division of General Education, New York University.

refers to the inauthentic Jew's evasions of his situation as "avenues of flight," and goes on to say that, to understand the problem, we must recognize these "avenues of flight" as strategies rather than as innate qualities.

In extending Sartre's analysis to the inauthentic Negro, an important difference should be pointed out: the Negro usually cannot conceal his identity, and thus, denied this simple escape, his reaction to the anti-Negro's allegations undergoes many more inversions and takes on many more layers of unreality. The inauthentic Jew is represented by Sartre as extremely self-conscious; the inauthentic Negro is less aware of the precise nature of the conflict in which he is caught. It has not yet been articulated for him by fictional or analytical writers as has the Jew's, and he has been too trapped in its mechanisms to see it unaided. Since he cannot hide from society, he often hides from himself. In fact, one can say that, in many cases, the inauthentic Negro almost entirely occupies himself with either affirming (ingratiation) or denying by his behavior what the anti-Negro says about him, until his personality is virtually usurped by a series of maneuvers none of which has any necessary relation to his true self.

According to Sartre, the term "inauthentic" implies no moral blame, for he regards it, and rightly so, as designating a kind of neurotic symptom, one understandably engendered by rejection at the hands of the all-powerful privileged majority. To appreciate the universal nature of inauthenticity, one need only examine the reaction patterns of any unfavored minority. And, to go further, it can even be shown that, in our society, almost every individual characteristic that radically tends away from the norm results in a degree of personality distortion. A very fat or very short man, for example, will in all probability develop special adaptive behavior. Or, to take a more subtle case, the contemporary artist, too, is frequently forced, by virtue of his nonconformity, into affectation and rationalization.

As an illustration of how Negroes' attitudes may be shaped by one kind of social pressure—occupational discrimination—I can cite a vivid example drawn from my own experience: One day, while walking through an Italian slum, I saw two Negroes – one about fifty, the other in his late twenties – shoveling manure from a stable into a truck. Struck by the symbolism of the scene, I stopped and regarded them for a moment. They noticed me, and, in turn, looked at me too. The older man's face was without expression; he was weary of scorn; his look seemed to say, "Yeah, I know, I'm a nigger and I'm shoveling manure, just like you'd expect." The younger man, though, appeared fiercely resentful, as though he might let me have a shovelful in the face. This incident was an epiphany for me. It showed one man's defeat, another's defiance, actuated by the same symbol, one whose meaning is unmistakably embodied in countless metaphors of our everyday speech. (The preponderance of Negroes among toilet attendants is part of the same symbolism.)

Admittedly then, authenticity is difficult to attain. To make it even more difficult, no one seems to know exactly what it consists in. Authenticity, as I take it, would mean stubborn adherence to one's essential self, in spite of the distorting pressures of one's situation. By the Negro's essential self, I mean his innate qualities and developed characteristics as an individual, as distinguished from his preponderantly defensive reactions as a member of an embattled minority.*

MOST pro-Negro agencies have dealt with the Negro's situation as such, and most of their proposals have tended toward en-

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*Obviously, of course, the Negro cannot develop in complete independence of his situation, but he can resist it in a more useful way; he can react against his reactions, and absent himself from the dialectical process of discrimination until—pushed by progress in understanding—it lamely falls over on one leg. In this he has certain advantages over the Jew, who, as Sidney Hook (*Partisan Review,* May 1949) has pointed out, is historically more explicitly and fundamentally opposed to Christian society. Writing more as a tragedian than as a social critic, Sartre advises the Jew to proudly carry his cross to his own crucifixion. The necessity of this martyrdom for the Jew (or the Negro) has been systematically refuted by Professor Hook in the same article.

abling the Negro to defy society's discrimination legally; they have apparently taken it for granted that, though inhumane, this discrimination is based on an objective evaluation of the Negro's social potential. Involved here are a number of confused assumptions that go a long way toward making the ideal of authenticity *unattractive* as well as difficult to attain. That the Negro's social potential is radically lower than the white's is seriously open to question. The assumption that it is, is generally based on two considerations—a behavioral and an aesthetic judgment of the Negro's "racial characteristics." Unreasonably generalizing in the face of all kinds of particular pressures, the anti-Negro alleges that the Negro is inherently lower in intelligence and more bestial in behavior than whites. This first claim is no longer taken very seriously by anyone but the rabid anti-Negro, as sociologists have finally exposed the falseness of the "evidence" supporting it. The second charge, however, still profoundly embarrasses both Negroes and pro-Negro agencies or individuals. The Negro's "blackness"* remains like a spot before their eyes. "How would *you* like to have a *black* baby?" still strikes terror into every heart, and even Negroes are quick to distinguish between light and dark.

This stain doggedly endures. It is the touchiest part of the Negro's defensiveness, as witnessed by the self-consciousness of his dress, his ubiquitous hat, his fondness for mustaches, etc. He seems to have no answer for this original blot on his escutcheon—and yet, answering it is so easy as to seem almost absurd.

The falsity of such physiognomic discrimination becomes immediately apparent when we realize that thousands of Negroes with "typical" features are accepted as whites merely because of light complexion, and when we further supplement this first lack of recognition with the converse case of the dark-skinned Negro who posed as an Oriental in a turban, and was cordially received all through the South. Then, too, it is extremely ironical that the Negro's color and hair texture are cited as signs of physiognomic inferiority by the very persons who spend considerable time and money burning themselves to similar hues and going to beauty parlors to have their hair frizzled. As for the much criticized grossness of Negro features, this is a greatly exaggerated conception, based on facial types which are far from uniform. Also, such evaluations completely leave out of account all question of other peoples' ugliness. There is no reason to believe that the incidence of ugliness is greater among Negroes than among non-Negroes.* And even if it were, much of it could be attributed—like so many of the Negro's so-called inherent characteristics—to poverty, which, as Céline remarked, "is like a giant that uses your features like a piece of cotton waste to wipe a filthy world."

To approach the question from the other side, Negro physiognomy is one of the favorite subjects of modern portrait sculpture, and the full lips and prominent bone structure of so many Negro faces is almost identical with that of *Vogue* models. And, if the Negro is more prognathic than most Caucasian types, this prognathism is the physiognomic hall mark of American males, as attested to by foreign satirists and by our own ideal image of ourselves (comic strips, advertising, Hollywood, etc.). In our society, it is considered infinitely preferable to the weak chin of a Casper Milquetoast. The average American Negro's muscular physique—setting aside the question of how far it was determined by selective breeding in slavery—is far from being considered undesirable. On the contrary, it is one of the strongest elements working against him in the anti-Negro's envy and fear.

All this goes to show the contingent nature of the Negro's inferiority feelings, as

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*The prejudicial word "black" is uncritically accepted by all parties concerned, in spite of its inaccuracy and its exclusively pejorative associations, such as the *black* ugly duckling, the *black* sheep, expressions like *blackguard*, *blackhearted*, etc., the frequent representation of the *devil* as black, etc.

*According to our standards, the Chinese's small stature, relatively expressionless eyes, and sallow complexion would seem far more undesirable than the Negro's alleged characteristics.

well as the true character of the standards applied against him. If the Negro is inferior, he is inferior by conditioning rather than endowment, and if he is "ugly," he is ugly not by nature, but *by definition.* Still, whatever the source of these evaluations, to the Negro they are painfully real, and it is partly on the basis of his own conditioned response —as well as society's reaction—to them, that his personality is formed and he prepares a face to meet the faces that he'll meet. Against such continuing prejudices, authenticity would be indeed heroic, but the preceding analysis, in exposing their lack of objective foundation, proves, it is hoped, that they cannot long resist the informed Negro's determination. In what follows I will attempt to show where that determination can be reclaimed from the irrational struggles of inauthenticity.

THE performance of the Negro night club entertainer mentioned at the beginning illustrates one of the inauthentic Negro's main avenues of flight—one which I propose to call *minstrelization.* Minstrelization results from the inauthentic Negro's acceptance of his situation as defined by the anti-Negro, and his attempt to make himself comfortable in it. "Keep smiling" is often his motto. Thus, for example, a Negro waiter in a restaurant I frequent smiles broadly or laughs no matter what one says to him. This is all the more remarkable since he has absolutely no sense of humor. Minstrelization can perhaps be explained historically: slave-owners probably gave preference to "good-natured" Negroes; thus a smiling countenance would increase one's chances for a less back-breaking job, or possibly avert a whipping, etc. But today, in non-Jim Crow cities, this attitude is certainly unnecessary. Today minstrelization is, in some cases, a useless reflex, and, in others, a willingness on the part of the inauthentic Negro to exploit his situation. He procures the approval of the whites by dissembling any suggestion of opposition between them, by making a clown of himself, and by demonstrating himself to be exhilarated by their patronage.

Minstrelization takes innumerable forms, in each case involving the Negro's willing capitulation to the anti-Negro's definition of him. A subtle example is the attribution of inherent greater "rhythmicality" to the Negro, and the inauthentic Negro's acceptance of this alleged trait, which is taken to show, of course, that the Negro is a more primitive creature, more animal-like, not yet emancipated by the short-circuiting effects of full consciousness from the primeval earth-throb. It is in the same category with the dog's sense of smell, the cat's ability to see in the dark, the mating instinct of mammals, etc. In an experiment, a psychologist even demonstrated that Negro children had better rhythmical responses than white children—which proves nothing about the Negro children except that they have not been equally encouraged to develop those inhibitions of rhythm correlated with white "refinement." To see how conditional this characteristic is, one need only go to a middle-class Negro dance, where there is no conspicuous rhythmical superiority.

Thoughtlessly accepting the white's attribution of greater rhythmicality to them, many inauthentic Negroes have made themselves arbiters of jazz music, popular dancing, and, by extension, all matters of extreme sensation and stimulation, including sexual behavior. Dramatizing this role, they have developed special rhythms in walking, speech intonation, etc.

Much of Negro humor is sadistically minstrelized, most of the jokes making capital of the Negro's unhappy situation. It may be objected that humor at one's own expense is often used to make an unpleasant situation more tolerable: in Germany under Hitler, for example, ironical authoritarian jokes were secretly circulated and served as a release for the oppressed minorities. However, the difference is this: in the case of the inauthentic Negro's humor, the identification is with the oppressor, the jokes are not ironical, i.e. inverted expressions of pathos, but self-hating and sadistic. This sadism is clearly revealed, incidentally, in the inauthentic Negro's frequent application of the abusive term "nigger" to members of his own group, and particularly in a highly exacerbated form of humor called "the dozens." "Playing the dozens" was a fad current among New York City Negroes some fifteen years ago. "The game," as it was called, consisted of insulting one another in the most extreme terms imaginable, imputing all sorts of corrupt behavior (usually of a sexual nature) to one's opponent and his immediate family. John Dollard, the well-known Yale sociologist, explained "the dozens" on the basis of the frustration-aggression hypothesis, which goes something like this: the Negro is frustrated in his striving for status; frustration engenders aggression; thus, the Negro's aggression is expressed against his companions in playing "the dozens." What is conspicuously lacking in Dollard's analysis is the explanation of why aggression should take this particular form and not another. Why is it only and precisely the Negro who has developed it? The answer should be obvious: because he identifies himself with his oppressors, and, consequently, empathizes into their contempt and hatred for the Negro.

Here is an actual example of spontaneous inauthentic Negro humor: In a poor Negro section in Brooklyn, a man of about thirty, walking his dog on a leash, encountered a group of his acquaintances. He was immediately greeted with derisive laughter, and one of the group shouted, "You aint 'sposed to be walkin' no dog, nigger! White people walks dogs! You 'sposed to be on a leash yo'self!" Taken in itself, this humor may not seem necessarily sadistic, but I witnessed the incident, and the sadistic intent of the group was unmistakable. It was further proved by the reaction of the man walking the dog: he felt himself ridiculed, instead of joining in the group solidarity to laugh away their common disadvantage. He and the group were polarized in opposed attitudes, aggressor and attacked.

CLOSELY allied to minstrelization is *romanticization,* another avenue of flight. Influenced by the current conception of the suffering artist or *poète maudit,* and by the identification of the artist as a rootless, alienated individual, many persons, feeling themselves discriminated against, have attempted to make a virtue of their situation, and have even tried to find in it a *raison d'être.* The heavy burden of guilt carried around by "progressive" people facilitates this attempt: anyone arrogating special airs to himself by virtue of society's maltreatment of him is guiltily acclaimed as some sort of hero. Certain psychoanalysts have even made heroes of various neurotic types. Thus, many Negroes have seen fit to consider themselves as crucibles of cultural unrest, as alembics boiling with the passionate crises of their society.

And the sado-masochistic character of so much of contemporary sexual behavior has given this attitude a strong component of sexual attraction, so that the Negro is seen by certain misguided whites as a beautiful, exotic creature, oppressed by our society like a handsome black panther in our cruel zoo, or as one sinned against, whom they wish to compensate by clumsily offering themselves. The drum beat of secret forces in the Negro is a familiar theme in inauthentic Negro novels. Here, for example, is a passage from *Alien Land,* by Willard Savoy (Dutton, 1949):

*He was something dirty.*
*Something to be spat on.*
*Something to be driven and cursed.*
*Not someone.*
*Something.*
*He felt that in the words—in the stares.*
*He felt that and was sick with anger and shame.*
*Sick—with the sickness of a race-old, futile despair.*
*Angry—with a hate that is not bred of reason.*
*Ashamed—with the desperate shame of a human being stripped of dignity.*
*Naked, pride whipped and bleeding.*

The very rhythm, mood, and linear arrangement of this passage shows that the author intended it as a prose poem of the tom-tom variety.

The real content of the inauthentic Negro's romantic attitude may be summed up in the idea that society owes him something, and, in specific situations, those people from whom he wants something owe him acquiescence. During the war this attitude was common in many soldiers, white and black. Now the inauthentic Negro wears his skin as a uniform, the uniform of a man fighting a war for you, against your worst self.

As part of his self-romanticization, the inauthentic Negro often forms exclusively Negro art projects—theater groups, anthologies, etc. These sometimes have the unfortunate consequence of encouraging a belief in the essential "difference" of Negroes. I remember hearing a woman exclaim at a Greenwich Village party, "Oh, I adore Negro theater!" —distinguishing "Negro theater" as one would say "flea circus" or "elephant ballet."

THE two attitudes already discussed—minstrelization and romanticization—are attitudes of acceptance and quasi-acceptance, and have a more or less affirmative character. A third avenue of flight—the *rejected attitude*—is entirely negative in its manifestations. The rejected attitude is expressed in a saying once popular among certain Negro groups: "You might as well play the game as bear the name." This is a paraphrase of Shakespeare's

*'Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed*
*When not to be receives reproach of being.*

The rejected attitude is like that of the child who, when unfairly accused by a parent of misbehavior, decides to be "really bad," as a protest against the accusation. The rejected attitude sometimes takes very subtle forms, many of which are so ramified as to be only speculatively traceable to the original real or imagined rejection. The rejected type studiously inverts the characteristics of the minstrelized type, whom he considers an unworthy sibling, a "mama's boy," and whom he describes as a "handkerchief-head nigger." Since the minstrelized type accepts the anti-Negro's attribution of high spirits and easy risibility to him, the rejected type carefully avoids laughter or exuberance in the presence of whites, and, often, by extension, even in their absence. Unresponsiveness is his outstanding characteristic. Thus, he wears, inexorably, an expression of intent and non-spontaneous awareness, Veblen's "physiognomy of astuteness" which he attributed to the sporting and lower delinquent classes. Since spontaneity is considered naive, childlike (as in "child of nature"), and ingratiatory, the rejected type almost always inhibits spontaneity and refuses to commit himself.

This tendency is most clearly and dramatically demonstrated in the Negro's social-dance patterns, which are formal, rigidly controlled in spite of their apparent freedom, and composed in accordance with his dominant attitudes. In this form of dancing, it is almost invariable practice to withhold acquiescence to the beat as long as possible, sometimes omitting entire beats. In conversation and interpersonal response as well, there is a certain syncopation, not in the interest of style or mere "jazziness" of gesture, but essentially expressive of resistance or aloofness.

PERHAPS the most damaging inauthentic type of all is the one whose attitude toward his self takes the form of *bestialization*. To properly understand the genesis and elaboration of this attitude it would be useful to introduce a concept developed by Gregory Bateson called "schismogenesis." According to Dr. Bateson, much of cultural change occurs as the result of cleavage, and the consequent dialectical behavior of the separated groups. The separated groups may proceed in either of two relations to each other, which Bateson calls symmetrical or complementary. Symmetrical schismogenesis is like bidding at an auction; in reaction to each other, both groups increase their tendencies in a common direction. Complementary schismogenesis is a growing apart; each segment develops in opposition to the other. Applied to the Negro's situation, the first cleavage was complementary, into white and Negro, further specified as more and less civilized respectively. Accepting the "less civilized" role, in the spirit of either ingratiation or rejection, the bestialized inauthentics then continued to widen the white-Negro gap in complementary directions, while cleaving, at the same time, each one against his fellows, in a symmetrical fashion, toward more defiant and non-civilized behavior. Because of his rejection of his true self, exacerbated by the unreality of his avenues of flight and the guilt they engender, the inauthentic Negro finds group solidarity impossible. Thus he develops antagonisms against those of his own group as well as against those whites who reject him. His insincerity and its resultant tensions isolate him from everyone.

Bestialization takes many forms, the most common being voluntary speech mutilations, both of syntax and intonation, such as, "Man, wut choo think you gonna do?" There is no question about the inauthenticity of these forms of speech, since many of those who affect them speak correctly when they desire to. Another form of speech mutilation is a high content of profanity, particularly of an aggressive sort. When asked what his chief duties were in a Negro settlement house for boys, a social worker acquaintance of mine answered, "Teaching them euphemisms for mother——— [unprintable word]." The purpose of these speech habits seems to be the assumption of a primitive role, probably encouraged by the contemporary cult of the primitive, as well as by the connotations of physical dominance and sexual potency usually associated with primitiveness. The cultivation of the bestialized role sometimes goes so far as to cause younger boys (inauthenticity begins early) to affect or exaggerate prognathic characteristics, and to assume a catatonic apelike stance.

Part of the bestialized inauthentic's intention is, undoubtedly, to excite the white's envy. Thus, Dr. Henry Elkin remarked in a lecture at the New School for Social Research that the Negro is regarded by many (whites and Negroes) as the white man's Id. I remember, in fact, numerous instances of the bestialized type's attempts to capitalize on this conception. During the war, one of the men in my Negro stevedore company pleaded sick, saying, "Lieutenant, ah cain't wuk t'day. Ma p——— hurt," imagining that this and similar excuses would be given credence by white officers, who, in deference to the Negro's alleged higher potency, would feel obliged to make allowances for sexual casualties.

Knife play, aggressive boasts, and pantomime threat are further instances of bestialization. In this connection, I recall a particular example, drawn again from army experience: A mild, well-behaved, and religious corporal began to show evidence of a psychosis. Significantly, the first sign of disturbance in him was aggressive behavior. He began to carry a bayonet in his belt, and he developed the profane speech patterns used by at least half the men in the company. The fact that his grudge against society, authority, or his self took this typical inauthentic form points up prophetically, if not verifiably, both the prevalence of the form and its irrationality.

I HAVE tried to show how minstrelization derives from the whites' attribution of high spirits and easy risibility to Negroes, how the rejected attitude derives from the denial of the minstrelized role: now, to complete the fantastic inverted pyramid of inauthentic behavior, I will try to show how a fourth avenue of flight derives, at the third remove, in opposition to bestialization. This fourth tendency I shall call *role-inversion*. Role-inversion comprises the deprecatory attempts of some inauthentic Negroes to dissociate themselves from the behavior of the bestialized type, and, to a certain extent, from all characteristics of the other inauthentic types that they deem unseemly and likely to cause further social disapproval. The chief forms of role-inversion are meekness, prissiness, unspontaneous religiosity, and highly effeminate male homosexuality. The meek inauthentic is "respectful" and "knows his place." The prissy inauthentic is easily recognized by a certain meaningless righteousness and painstaking propriety in his expression; he often wears rimless glasses. The pseudo-religious inauthentic shies away from the bestialized

Holy Roller churches, and is much given to the reading of religious pamphlets in the subway. The extremely feminine male homosexual denies in his behavior all allegations of brutality or aggression, in a surface attempt to secure love and acceptance.

The list of patterns of inauthenticity or avenues of flight could certainly be made longer, and new ones are developing all the time, but these, I think, are the principal current ones, and, in any case, their individual character is not the most important question; it is enough that these few be recognized and understood as symptoms of the complicated maladjustment of white-Negro relations. Legal problems are easier to solve than psychological ones. Organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People devote themselves almost exclusively to the former. Most of the recent books on the subject have been reviewed in these pages and have been shown to be ineffectual in a psychological sense. Those whites who have attempted to take ameliorative action have been, for the most part, "liberals," or "progressive" persons who usually do as much or more harm than good, asking the American public to take the Negro like a pill to cure a cultural hangover. Their clumsy apostrophizing of the Negro disgusts many Negroes and often bores or antagonizes those whites who are not already prejudiced. What is needed, above all, is plain speaking. Whites and inauthentic Negroes exist in a state of psychological war: everyone has taken a stand, and sticks to it. Some of the Negroes are collaborators, others are guerillas (often spelled "gorilla" in the tabloids), fighting it out without organization. The situation reminds one of a Hollywood drama of misunderstanding: All during the film you want to shout, "But don't they see? If only he didn't . . . then he wouldn't. . . ." The discrepancy seems so obvious: if one could only get the principals to see, step by step, the development of their estrangement!

Worst of all, the inauthentic Negro is not only estranged from whites—he is also estranged from his own group and from himself. Since his companions are a mirror in which he sees himself as ugly, he must reject them; and since his own self is mainly a tension between an accusation and a denial, he can hardly find it, much less live in it. In extreme cases, he may be said to live wholly by conditioning from outside, like a dog trained to wag its tail or bite. In place of useful action, he has worked up an act. This act is his tradition, for he has no other. Unlike the inauthentic Jew, he has no cultural residue to which he can secretly return, or by which he can at least negatively orient himself. He is adrift without a role in a world predicated on roles. The inauthentic Jew knows that he has a role, however disadvantageous, whenever he wants it; he is at least an expatriate in a psychological sense, and this is a paradoxical consolation. The inauthentic Negro's only common bond is that of *not being* anything else. And, most unfortunately, this not-being is seized upon as a virtual principle by those who would help him. It is used as a rationalization for everything that he does not become. Lincoln emancipated the Negro from slavery; our contemporary liberals have emancipated the Negro from responsibility and self-determination. He has joined the wooden Indian—not in front of cigar stores, but in night club toilets, bootblack parlors, on ghetto corners, and in the pages of "progressive" papers.

ANY rational proposition presupposes a set of defined terms. Until the Negro defines his self, then, he's not going to get very far in formulating a program for living. At present, he is still between Jim Crow and political scarecrow—both propositions based on an $x$ factor. "Somewhere unspeaking sits my life," wrote a contemporary poet, and perhaps the Negro's answer is "dumb speech kicking in the rivers of my blood." A group identity for the Negro would mean status and a commensurate frame of reference; it would mean that the Negro is no longer a total outcast looking in, his nose hungrily flattened against the other side of the window. It would give him a core, like the core of a baseball, enabling him to rebound.

But the inauthentic Negro still confounds the issue. To the anti-Negro he adds his anti-self. By his acceptance or denial of the anti-Negro mythology, he continually re-postulates it and keeps it alive. Having accepted the easy way of ingratiation or the secondary gratifications of his position, he is unwilling to listen to reason or consider change. And his attitude is infectious: Until he stops bleaching his skin and his soul with patent preparations, until he begins to straighten out himself instead of his hair, no improvement is likely. Certainly the situation into which he's born is untenable, but, instead of correcting it, he consolidates it, and, in so doing, plays right into the hands of his vigilant enemy, the anti-Negro. About the anti-Negro we can say very little that's new. We know him, he's been described; with a few adjustments, Sartre's portrait of the anti-Semite fits him too.

His relentless irrationality is enough to explain everything, and it is a misguided fear of seeming to propitiate him that discourages so many Negroes from attempting to improve their situation. But here they're mistaken; today the anti-Negro is a secondary problem; their first problem is their individual selves, their own authenticity. Their personalities have been lost in the shuffle, a shuffle with marked cards, dealt from the bottom of the deck. If the majority of Negroes would authenticate themselves – i.e., prove themselves fundamentally "different" only in appearance – this would be an extremely important step in validating their desperately needed identity. For it is untrue to say of the inauthentic Negro that "he is a man just like yourself." He isn't, and all but the hysterically blind can see that he isn't. He's very careful to distinguish himself from you, sometimes spending his whole life making that distinction explicit and emphatic. If you reached for his hand, it might lie limp in yours, or he might thumb it over his shoulder. He might even hit you with it. Whichever he did, the NAACP, the Urban League, the progressive papers, *et al*, would explain that "you made him that way." And maybe you did, but that doesn't mean that you alone can unmake him by simply reversing the process. You can let him know that your mind and heart are open; the rest is up to him.

# FROM THE AMERICAN SCENE

## CULTURE ON RUTGERS SQUARE

### *The Fervent Days on East Broadway*

### S. L. BLUMENSON

WHAT St. Stephen's Platz was to Vienna, Rutgers Square was to New York's Lower East Side at the turn of the century. A one-block triangle situated at the junction of East Broadway, Canal, and Division Streets, it formed a kind of dividing line among the Jewish newcomers, after they had crowded out the earlier Irish and German immigrants. South of East Broadway, towards the East River, from Catherine Street on the west to Jackson Street on the east, in hundred-year-old dilapidated tenements, lived the immigrants from western Russia, the Pale – mostly Lithuanian Jews, "Litvaks." North of East Broadway, as far as Houston Street, from the Bowery on the west to Mangin Street on the east, in rectangular, narrow, cobblestoned streets, in even more dilapidated tenements, there settled the immigrants from Poland, Galicia – the "Galitzianer" – Bessarabia, Bukovina, and a scattering of Sephardic Jews from Turkey and Greece.

During the day Rutgers Square was a quiet business district, but with the coming of darkness it erupted "Kultur" like an active volcano: religion and atheism, free love and vegetarianism, politics and ideologies. But in peace. The presence of our neighbor, Thomas Mulvany, and the "billy" in his belt, gave *kapuler untzuherenes* (tactful hints) that culture would not be disturbed.

THE Square could not match Vienna's Café de la Europa, but there was a café where coffee and Vienna rolls and butter were sold for three cents. Vienna's famous Hoher Market, a stone's throw from St. Stephen's Platz, was duplicated by the peddlers and hucksters on Essex and Hester Streets, which was generally called "Chazer Mark"–"Pig Market"–though no pig ever added to its filth; the language in "Chazer Mark" was as abusive, picturesque, and expressive as that of the Hoher Market. Instead of the café Zum Columbus, situated near the site where Marcus Aurelius lived and wrote, there was a café called Zum Essex on Essex Street, and instead of the shrine to the Virgin, with its ornate trimmings and little cherubim, there stood the Schiff Fountain right opposite Essex Street. Grand Street, two blocks north, with the city's two largest department stores, Ridley's and Lord and Taylor's, was to Rutgers Square what the Graben was to St. Stephen's Platz. The East River took the place of the Danube Canal. The slums and four- and five-story rickety tenements in the streets radiating from Rutgers Square could well compare with the Judengassen opening on Hoher Platz and with other parts of the Innerstadt.

The same poverty that existed among the denizens of the Judengassen was duplicated on the East Side. And the same social strata among the poor. For, when a people has

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S. L. BLUMENSON will be remembered by readers of COMMENTARY for two previous articles on the earlier, glorious days of New York's Lower East Side: "Utopia on Columbia Street" (October 1948) and "Revolt of the Reefer-Makers" (July 1949). Here Mr. Blumenson turns his attention to some exotic and luxuriant manifestations of the American Jewish "Kultur" of a bygone era. Mr. Blumenson was born in Minsk, Russia, and came to this country fifty-five years ago. Since 1935 he has lived in California.

lived in poverty for centuries, degrees in poverty develop, even as *yichus* among the wealthy, the rich, the well-to-do, and the comfortable. Among the poor on the East Side there were four degrees: the *oriman* – the poor man; the *kabtzen* – the poverty-stricken (these first two categories made up the respectable poor); the *dolfin*–the pauper; and the *evyon*–the destitute. These divisions are very ancient with the Jews. Does not the Psalmist say: *Mekimi me-ofor dol, me-ashpos yorim evyon* ("He raiseth the pauper from the ground, the destitute from the dunghill")?

On the south side of the Square were located the cultural and financial institutions and the press. At the east end, near Jefferson Street, were the offices and presses of the *Yiddishes Tageblatt,* representing the conservative sentiments of the community. It stood for Orthodoxy in religion, Americanism as is, and for *teheres ha-mishpocha,* sanctity of the family. This stand on *teheres ha-mishpocha* was an answer to the *Briefkasten,* the letters-to-the-editor column of the younger Socialist *Forverts,* which printed some very spicy and intimate stories of family life. These letters boomed the circulation of the *Forverts,* the taste for spicy stories not being limited to *radikalen* only.

A little farther up the Square stood the green, iron-grilled "skyscraper" which housed the Jarmulowsky Bank, a name known in every town, village, and hamlet all over Central Europe. It was Jarmulowsky who provided the *shiffskarten,* the steamship tickets, to probably half the immigrants during the last two decades of the 19th century. There was Fischer's bookstore, where books of all kinds, including technical tomes and penny Westerns, could be bought or rented. There were the offices of budding young attorneys, "counselors," eight to ten to a room, all starving to death, and one or two stores which housed business brokers, real estate salesmen, and notaries public – the three somehow always together. (The real estate business consisted mainly of selling lots on the installment plan, most of them located under water on the north shore of Long Island.)

Around the corner from the Square, on Rutgers Street, opposite the Catholic church, were the offices of the *Abendblatt,* the Socialist daily of the De Leon faction, under the editorship of Louis Miller. Near by were the offices of the struggling young *Forverts,* the Socialist daily of the Debs faction, under the editorship of Abraham Cahan. Between the two was the Anarchist weekly, the *Freie Arbeter Stimme,* under the editorship of S. Yanofsky, newly arrived from London, England. Mr. Cahan feuded mortally with Mr. Miller, and Mr. Miller with Mr. Cahan, although until the cleavage in the Socialist Labor party they had been bosom friends. Mr. Yanofsky had no use for either of them, and the three, altogether, had no use for Mr. Kasriel H. Sarasohn, owner and publisher of the *Tageblatt,* and for his *teheres ha-mishpocha.*

The best business on the Square was done by Billy the Oysterman, who sold oysters on the half shell from a pushcart, right in front of the Vienna roll establishment. He was a member of the John F. Ahearn Tammany club, whose clubhouse was on East Broadway, near the R. H. Hoe and Company printing press factory. Of course, Billy offered no competition to the coffee and Vienna rolls, for no Jew in those days would even look at an oyster. Only one or two of the more courageous Anarchist youth, to spite God and the *Rav Hakelol* (Chief Rabbi), would indulge, and then be nauseated for days after. But what sacrifices doesn't one have to make for a holy cause?

Thomas Mulvany, in the uniform of New York's finest, symbolized different things to the different exponents of different causes. To Mr. Dunlop, a crippled religious fanatic–who considered himself a second apostle to the Jews, and who came down nightly in an ambulance-like vehicle and exhorted the Jews from a wheel chair to abjure their mistaken ways and accept the true faith–Thomas Mulvany stood for security. Although Dunlop was not heckled or attacked as was the professional apostate Warsheviak and his few professional converts, he was argued with and often had to leave the Square with his sermon unfinished.

Warsheviak, who was financed by some well-meaning old ladies, had a mission in a store near the Square. No one ever came to listen to him unless he paid for the attendance. Twice a week he erected a *bima* on the Square, near the Schiff Fountain; in his attempts to preach, he was pelted with overripe tomatoes and pineapples, of which there was no scarcity, Hester Street being near by. To him Mulvany provided a safe escort back to his store, where the windows were always boarded up, since no glass could last more than an hour.

From the corner of Jefferson Street came the blaring sound of trumpets, and the thumping and tinkle of tambourines, and the sweet voices of women, young and old, dressed in the blue bonnets with the red band of the Salvation Army. From the opposite corner came the competing voices of the Volunteers. And then there were the nightly orators of the two feuding factions of the Socialist party, venting their spleen, respectively, against Louis Miller and Abraham Cahan, and ending with recriminations against the orating *genossen*. Sometimes this led to fist fights, but Mulvany easily broke them up and sent the disputants on their way.

And above all this turbulence came the strident voice of Emma Goldman, preaching in a crescendo against everything and everybody and excoriating the innocent Mulvany as the representative of capitalist oppression. What most people didn't know was that despite his usual grin at everything Emma said, Mulvany had a fair knowledge of Yiddish, and understood most of Emma's references to the American "gendarmes" and "cossacks." It was one of the reasons for his being assigned to the Square. To Mulvany, Emma's violent rhetoric was nothing new. He had heard similar ranting against the English police by Irish orators in Ireland. As Mulvany put it: "While I am no aginster, I am not agin' any one who is an aginster, so long as they don't break the peace."

And totally oblivious to all this din and noise and contention, there stood, and still stands, on the southeast corner of East Broadway and Jefferson Street, overlooking the Square, the four-story building of the Educational Alliance with its iron picket fence and its large assembly hall. It also housed the People's Synagogue, library, meeting rooms, roof garden, and many other activities. Established for our good by our German Jewish brethren, it was the entrance hall to America for all the newly arrived, and the door through which thousands found their way to the culture and opportunities of the new land.

If the night remained clear, the peaceful meetings would last until midnight, and then small groups would continue to argue for hours longer. If the skies clouded up and a sudden downpour caught the disputants and listeners, most would adjourn to the café Zum Essex (pronounced "Essig") in a basement store on Essex Street near Canal, opposite what is today Seward Park, and continue the disputes, but in peace. Sigmund Manilescu, a dignified Rumanian Jew, the owner, the cook, the Herr Direktor and Herr Oberst (over two *kellner*), tolerated no noisy arguments. He had nothing but contempt for these Litvaks who were always bickering and could never agree. Sigmund was himself an ardent follower of the Goldfaden school of stage craft, and never missed a performance of *Shulamith* and the *Tzvei Kunye Lemels*. He was a *patriot* (fan) of Bessie Tomashevsky and of Sigmund Mogelewski, the great Yiddish comedian. But politics—who was he, Charlie Adler or Alma Gluck's husband? Barney the Alderman? He had enough *tzores* without politics.

The Zum Essex was famous for its lavish cuisine. Sigmund served a five-course dinner (supper) consisting of soup, meat, potato, stewed prunes, and all the pumpernickel one could eat, for the price of twelve cents. (To Litvaks he made a concession: he served herring and onion instead of soup.) In addition, any steady customer could come in any time for a free glass of seltzer. On Friday night, the Sabbath meal, he added generous portions of gefilte fish, with strong horseradish flavored with beet juice. Sigmund was as proud of his horse-radish as a French chef is of his special salad dressing. Sigmund did not allow the waiters to pass toothpicks at the end of a meal, the accepted East Side manner of soliciting a tip. His toothpicks stood on the table for any customer to help himself. The waiters were well taken care of—two dollars a week and meals, and a recommendation to weddings and banquets where they could pass not only toothpicks but also a saucer as a collection plate.

East Broadway was the boulevard of the East Side, and the gathering place for the serious-minded young men and young women in the evenings. There the young couples went walking of evenings, male and female, as God created them, and not male and male, and female and female, as decorum demanded in the old country. In sibilant Lithuanian Yiddish, intermingled with the deep diphthongs of Polish Yiddish, and sometimes the sing-song inflections of the Hungarian, they discussed deep cultural realities and the evils confronting the world. And as if in deference to the "Anarchistlech" on the opposite side of the street, they frequently assassinated the King's English, the Czar's Russian, and the Kaiser's *Hochdeutsch.*

After parading up and down the boulevard for hours, some would adjourn to Caufold's Ice Cream Parlor on Clinton Street, where over a plate of chocolate and vanilla, served with two spoons, the discussions would assume a less profound but more intimate tone. Others would turn south on Rutgers Street and saunter down to little Rutgers Park, teeming with people, and seek futilely for a quiet nook in the darkness. Still others turned down Jackson Street and strolled down to the park at Corlears Hook, at the bend in the river, and sat and watched the red and amber ships' lights float by in the gloom.

It is of this spirit of freedom and Kultur and romance that my cousin "Kolege" Beril, the "Yiddisher Heinrich Heine," sang:

*Geien mir shpatzieren in dem freien land*
*Mutig und freilech, hand in hand—*
*East Broadway, East Broadway, vu di liebe brent,*
*Vu yeder Sadie iz a lady un yeder Sam a gent.*

Which, freely translated, means:

"We go strolling in this free land,
With courage and joy, hand in hand—
East Broadway, East Broadway, where love is heaven-sent,
Where every Sadie is a lady and every Sam a gent."

And so on, for thirty-nine more stanzas.

ON THE south side of East Broadway, a few doors away from the Educational Alliance, in a canopied building housing a ballroom for weddings and large meetings, and smaller meeting rooms on the upper floors, the Brotherly Beneficial and Kultur Society had its permanent club rooms. Its purpose was to help needy brothers in distress and to spread Kultur through lectures (pronounced "lektzyes"), discussions, and *forlezungen* (readings). During the business part of the meetings the members addressed each other with the title of *bruder* (brother); during political discussions as *genosse* (comrade); during cultural debate as *kolege* (colleague), with the hard "g." It was considered an insult to be called *bruder* or *genosse* when engaged in cultural pursuits.

Among the members of the Kultur committee was my cousin, Kolege Beril, who was known in Kultur circles as the Yiddisher Heinrich Heine; he gained his fame by his masterpiece (already quoted), "East Broadway, East Broadway," which ran to forty stanzas and a refrain (a forty-first was added after the death of the *Rav Hakelol*). It extolled the great virtues of this street of Kultur, although of course it could not compare with Henry Street in refinement. After all, Henry Street housed the established professionals, lawyers, doctors, dentists, engineers, and two famous *rabbunim* (*l'havdil*).

My cousin, Kolege Beril, worked for a wholesale jobber of paper products on the East Side. All day long he tied up bundles of paper bags and made deliveries with a pushcart, mainly to peddlers on Hester and Essex Streets, and in his spare time composed his poems. He had no trouble in having the poems published, although he did not appear in the established press. The rumor was that the well-known Jewish poet, Morris Rosenfeld, who was also called the Yiddisher Heine, kept him out. But this was not true at all. The fact is that Rosenfeld always repudiated the title Yiddisher Heine. He contended that Heinrich Heine was the German Morris Rosenfeld.

Almost weekly some of the unemployed journalists on the East Side, and they were legion, got together and published a four-page weekly which never ran for more than one issue. They welcomed Kolege Beril's poems, which usually ran to a full page, and in payment gave him the title of the Yiddisher Heine, probably to *kibitz* Rosenfeld. In addition to my cousin's poems, these weeklies printed translations of spicy stories by Maupassant, some of Gorki's short stories, an article on astronomy garbled from the encyclopedia, an attack on the editors of the established press, and the beginnings of two or three romantic novels, which were never concluded. (Did Prince Alexander of Jerusalem marry the daughter of the King of Nablus; or did the miracle-working Rabbi of Kotzk drive out the *gilgul* from the body of the *yeshiva bocher?*)

In the evening my cousin Kolege Beril dressed the part of the poet. His hair was long and unkempt. He wore a black slouch hat, a black three-quarter-length cape, a red wing tie, and eyeglasses, although there was nothing wrong with his eyesight. At times he attempted to raise a beard in the manner of Walt Whitman, but Selma, his boss's daughter, who was his constant companion, didn't like beards. Because of a discussion in the Kultur Committee, mostly provoked by our *lantsman,* Kolege Barnet Finkel the *filozof,* Beril later left the ranks of the Brotherly Beneficial and Kultur Society and joined their hated rivals the Pioneers of Liberty, the Anarchistlech on the north side of the block. Kolege Barnet Finkel, who was called the *filozof,* was the leading light in the Kultur Committee. He was a heavy thinker, having attended a German university for one year. When it came to lectures or readings, Kolege Barnet leaned towards the bottomless deeps of German profundity —Schopenhauer, Kant, Goethe, Schiller, and Shakespeare. (Having read some of Shakespeare in German, Kolege Barnet included him among German dramatists.)

Once a week, on Friday nights, there were popular lectures by members of the unemployed pool of lecturers. The persecutions in Russia had driven many writers, intellectuals, and students into exile, and some by way of Germany and Paris and London came to the East Side seeking employment. Among these were names like Feigenbaum, Zametkin, Winchefsky, Girzdansky, Kats, Selikovits, Philip Krants, Jacob Magidoff, Hermalin, Kobrin, Zevin, and later Chaim Zhitlovsky and many others who were to become well-known journalists and authors. Although most were radicals, they were compelled to accept work with the hated *Tageblatt.* They changed jobs quite often, so that they might be writing one week for the *Forverts* attacking Sarasohn, and the next week for the *Tageblatt* attacking Abraham Cahan.

Lectures on popular subjects within the ken of the membership and their friends did not satisfy Kolege Barnet, and he prevailed upon some of the young instructors at the Thomas Davidson School to lecture on more elevated matters. One of the instructors, studying for a doctorate in literature, spoke on the subjunctive in Shakespeare. The following week another read a paper on the gerund in the Aeneid. Then came a lecture on the umlaut in Goethe.

It was after the third lecture that my cousin, Kolege Beril, on being asked by the proud Kolege Barnet how he liked the lectures, became exasperated, and blurted out: "Tell me, Kolege Finkel, *vos haken zei a cheinik; vos dreien zei a spodik?"* ("What are they blathering about?") Kolege Barnet was outraged and shocked at such a way of talking about three prospective *Doktor Philosophen.* So he said: "Bruder Beril, you were always an *am haaretz* [illiterate] and will remain an *am haaretz* until your dying day." To be addressed "Bruder" instead of "Kolege" at a cultural affair was equivalent to a slap in the face. The next day, with the assent of Selma, Beril joined the Anarchistlech on the opposite side of the street.

KOLEGE Barnet Finkel was also referred to as the Yiddisher Spinoza, although he himself preferred the title of Yiddisher Ingersoll, the iconoclast. He was the enemy of Orthodoxy, and although his knowledge of Hebrew was limited to the five books of Moses, he labored hard to uncover errors in the Talmud. And he was famous with the "atheists" for uncovering such an error in the tractate Baba Kama, in the section Nezikin, which deals with the primary causes of damage and negligence.

The opening lines are: *Arba* (four) *avos* (primary causes) *nezikin* (of damage), *hashor* (the ox), *ve-habor* (the pit), *ve-hamave* (feeding, trespass), *ve-hahever* (fire). The word *avos* in Hebrew also means "fathers." When the iconoclast Kolege Barnet began to spell out *arba*—four, *avos*—fathers, he went no further, for here was a glaring mistake in the Talmud. Everyone knows that there were only three fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And when you consider that the Talmud was about fifteen hundred years old, and no one had discovered the error, was it a wonder that Kolege Barnet was classed with Spinoza? His discovery was headlined in the Yiddish *Emes* ("Truth"), which appeared for one issue.

Kolege Barnet was now classed with Zalmen Hourevitch as a *charif,* a critical student. Zalmen, in his second term in English literature at the Davidson School, discovered that the Sufistic quatrains of Omar Khayyám were not composed by a Persian tippler but by a certain Persian Jew by the name of Chayim (Persian: Khayyám). And Zalmen went on to explain that there is reason to believe that this Reb Chayim was a Karaite. The word *sufi* in Arabic means the same as *sefer* in Hebrew—book—implying that he lived by the written law and repudiated the oral law.

Of course, Zalmen, who was a fine Hebrew scholar, with a fair knowledge of Arabic, repudiated Kolege Barnet's Talmudic discovery; in fact, he laughed at him. This *am haaretz,* this illiterate in a class with Zalmen Hourevitch of the Minsk Hourevitches! With Zalmen, the descendant of the great Talmudist Aaron ben Jacob Halevy Hourevitch and of the great *Minsker Rov* Joseph ben Loeb Hourevitch! *Ai,* America!

THE third member of the Kultur committee was my second cousin, Kolege Lebel, the actor and artist. Lebel was an exponent of the Little Theater movement and directed a little-theater group made up of some of the members of the Society and their girl friends. He favored such plays as *Der Yiddisher Kenig Lear, Der Yiddisher Hamlet, Der Yiddisher Rober fun Schiller, Di Yiddishe Medea, Di Yiddishe Veber fun Hauptmann, Di Yiddishe Verzunkene Glocke, Got, Mensh un Teufel* by Jacob Gordon, and most of all, *The Bells* by Emile Erckmann. Nice, *light* plays, as you can see. Lebel's whole spare time was devoted to the theater. In fact, it was because of the theater that he was compelled to flee Russia.

Kolege Lebel, who came from the town of Schmilovits, really had an artistic background. His father and grandfather had been stone cutters, graving out Hebrew lettering on tombstones, and Lebel was also related to the famous artist Chaim Soutine who was born in Schmilovits about the time Lebel had to leave. It was in Schmilovits that he blossomed out as a director and actor. While on a visit to Minsk he had witnessed a performance of *Akedos Yitzchak* ("The Sacrifice of Isaac") by the Minsk Yiddish Art Theater. On his return from Minsk he brought a copy of the play with him, and began to assemble a cast.

Immediately there was an outcry of *"apikurses"* (heresy), but after reading the play to the rabbi, Lebel received permission to proceed on condition that the part of Sarah, the only female part, be played by a male. After some rehearsals, the play was given in the synagogue, the *bima* serving as a stage. But as in all first performances, accidents will happen. Overhead in the ceiling was a trap door through which the *bat kol* (the Voice of the Lord) was to cry out "Abraham, Abraham," to which call Abraham answered *"hineni"* ("here I am"). The trap door, rotted with age, gave way as the Voice of the Lord lay across it, and the *bat kol* came tumbling down on top of the *bima,* the players, and the ram which was to take the place of Isaac. The frightened ram broke away, jumped over the *bima* into the audience, made for the door, and disappeared.

But this was the least of Lebel's troubles. Lebel, who played the part of King Abimelech, was dressed in the uniform of the local constable and carried his sword. The government representative, a St. Petersburg bureaucrat who had come to witness the performance and to see if it was subversive, was outraged. It was not permitted for a Jew to wear a uniform, except in the Czar's army, and there was a stiff penalty for carrying a sword. So the government representative ordered the constable to recover his uniform and sword, and to take Lebel into custody. This would have blown over after the usual bribe, but Lebel at the time was dodging induction into the army. So with the help of twenty-five rubles paid to the constable, Lebel "broke" jail, hid out in an adjoining town, obtained a false passport, and left for Paris. From there he came to the East Side, where he immediately obtained work with a photographer on Division Street near East Broadway.

Lebel was also in great demand by many East Side radical organizations for staging *"lebedige pikches,"* dramatic clusters of living statues, at their annual balls, which were usually held in Valhalla Hall or Turn Hall on Broome Street. At all these joyous occasions half the space was occupied with the posturings of Kolege Lebel's groups. In one corner five or six miners were dying of silicosis, and their wives and small children, faces full of talcum powder, were starving to death. Another group featured consumptive garment workers coughing away over their sewing machines, while a boss with an artificially bloated stomach stood over them with a whip. Lebel's artistic groupings were greatly enjoyed by everyone and were praised in the radical press.

Lebel did well for himself. With the advent of the movies he became a camera man, was advanced to director and producer. He has long since retired to an estate in California, but among his orange and lemon and almond trees, and the patter and laughter of his grandchildren, Lebel, his mustache and tousled hair now white with age, still sports tan plaid trousers, a black velveteen coat, and a black beret with a red button on top. He is a noted collector of his cousin Chaim Soutine's paintings. And every Purim his "stock company" of players, composed of his grandchildren and their friends, stages the play *Akedos Yitzchak* on his lawn. But he takes no chances: the Voice of the Lord comes from a small microphone.

WHILE the Koleges on the south side of the street pursued their austere cultural and philosophical studies, their hated rivals, the Anarchistlech, the youthful members of the Pioneers of Freedom on the north side of the street, sought the truth loudly and uninhibitedly. Most of them were in their 'teens, newly arrived from the small towns and villages of Russia and Galicia and Poland, where they had been compelled to follow small-town *derech eretz* (conventions) and the strict rules of Orthodoxy. Now they were behaving like young colts let out to pasture for the first time.

Their hate was directed not so much against the capitalistic order or established society as against the Chief Rabbi, Jacob Joseph, may he rest in peace. The Chief Rabbi had been born in the village of Krozhe, in the province of Kovno, and had attended the yeshivas of Volozhin and Eishishok, where he had been an outstanding student. After receiving his rabbinical diploma, he in time became rabbi of Kovno, and from there he went to Vilna. From this sphere of peace and quiet, where he was held in great respect, he was brought to the turbulent East Side to be chief rabbi of thousands of quarreling Orthodox Jews.

(Orthodoxy on the East Side was divided into two contending factions, each demanding the right to issue testimonials of *kashrut* to butchers, slaughterhouses, milk stores, delicatessen stores, and to grant *plumbes,* lead seals on the feet of slaughtered fowl. Of course, these were not issued gratis, and great sums of money were involved. The faction which had brought the Chief Rabbi over from Vilna declared the opposition testimonials to be fraudulent, and asserted all products not having the signature of the Chief Rabbi to be unclean. The opposition answered with a like decree, signed by three well-known East Side rabbis who did not recognize the Chief Rabbi, warning all Orthodox Jews against buying products without their signatures. This controversy ran on for years after the death of the Chief Rabbi, and was resolved only fifteen years ago in the New York Supreme Court.)

In addition to the Chief Rabbi, the Anarchistlech hated also Rabbi Adolph M. Radin, the father of Professors Max and Paul Radin, who was rabbi of the People's Synagogue in the Educational Alliance, where he conducted services in the Reform ritual and gave weekly sermons Friday night, all in *Hochdeutsch* which the overflow audience did not understand; and the great orator Zvi Hirsh Masliansky, whose biting sarcasm and devastating ridicule in fine understandable Yiddish drove the Anarchistlech into a frenzy.

The Anarchistlech loved to sing and dance, and above all to have banquets. An institution had grown up among the *radikalen* on the East Side called *vetcherinka. Vetcherinka* is the diminutive for the Russian *vetsera* or *vetchera,* meaning evening meal. It became a custom in *radikale* circles to welcome every arriving exile—and they came in boat loads—with a *vetcherinka.* The more prosperous held their *vetcherinkas* in the café Zum Essex, where it usually consisted of herring and pumpernickel, *mamaliga,* and tea. These celebrations were held after 8:30 PM, and Herr Direktor and Herr Oberst Sigmund Manilescu served it himself and charged nine cents a meal. Over glasses of fizzing seltzer they toasted the honored guest, drank toasts to world revolution, and sang revolutionary songs.

The Anarchistlech, however, to spite God and the Chief Rabbi, held their *vetcherinkas* in their clubrooms on the ground floor of a brownstone residence, a few doors from the Jefferson Club, the Republican stronghold. There they served ham sandwiches, smearing loads of sharp mustard to kill the taste, and tea *with milk.* This shocked and outraged the whole East Side, and the *vetcherinkas* became known as *chazer* parties.

But the Lord was with the Chief Rabbi. It came to pass that a very important exile, a theoretical anarchist from London, arrived on the East Side. The *Tageblatt* denounced him as a dangerous anarchist. Thereupon the Anarchistlech decided to honor the new arrival with a gala *vetcherinka,* and to stage a demonstration against the *Tageblatt* the night following. Man proposes and God disposes. The entertainment committee decided on a daring novelty. They dispensed with the usual sandwiches and decided to substitute something that would smite the Orthodox. Early on the morning of the *vetcherinka* they bought out Billy the Oysterman's stock. But not having had any previous experience with mollusks, they left them without ice all day. After the festivities the honored guest and the courageous few who had really indulged were in Gouverneur Hospital having their stomachs pumped, and the rest of the membership were too busy the following day and evening to bother with Mr. Sarasohn and his *Tageblatt.* Our neighbor Mr. Mulvany, with the help of God, had a peaceful night.

AMONG the outstanding members of the Anarchistlech, besides my cousin Beril, there was also Sasha (Alexander) Berkman. The two were the leaders of the Johannes Most faction, believers in the "direct action" which Comrade Herr Most preached in his fiery German-language paper, the *Freiheit,* on which Berkman was employed as a typesetter. Johannes Most was the mortal enemy of a group of peaceful anarchists headed by another Austrian, Joseph Peukert, who had been a well-known socialist in Austria and whom Most accused of being a police agent, traitor, and spy.

Except to lecture on subjects like "Anarchistic strategy and tactics as preached by Malatesta and Ferrer, as related to the teachings of Mella and Lorengo and the various Spanish manifestos, considering the Anarcho-Communist teachings of Kropotkin as against the Christian-Anarcho teachings of Tolstoy" (in German it sounds better though a little longer), it was beneath the dignity of Comrade Herr Most, ex-deputy of the Austro-Hungarian parliament, to associate on equal terms with rabble like the comrades on East Broadway. The meeting place of the real intellectual comrades was on Norfolk Street, in Sachs' Café. There the "cream" of the *radikalen* gathered nightly, and over Mrs. Sachs's fine coffee and famous cheese cake discussed the problems and philosophies of the day. Unlike the *genossen* in Herrick's Café, there was no gesticulation or noisy argument. These were mannerly, *gemuetliche* intellectuals, exiles and martyrs of world revolution, graduates of many famous universities.

At one table would be Comrade Solataroff, well-known lecturer and exponent of world revolution. Beside him Comrade Kats, editor of *Die Freie Gezelshaft,* the Yiddish Anarchist weekly opposed to the policies of editor Yanofsky of the *Freie Arbeter Stimme.* At his side sat Comrade Peukert, Michael Cohen, and Dr. Hoffman, the latter two well-known fellow travelers.

At Comrade Yanofsky's table sat the "Poet of Revolt," Edelstadt, the "Yiddisher François Villon," reciting his latest epic to a fascinated audience. There was "Grandpa" Netter, a bearded patriarch, a great Talmudist, who in his old age repudiated Orthodoxy and joined the Comrades. With him was his daughter, Chaverte (fem.: *chaver*—comrade) Netter, young and good-looking and devoted to the holy cause. At other tables were slummers, members of the English-language press looking for local color, and occasionally members of the Bomb Squad, in very evident disguise.

Now and then the great leader himself, the exiled ex-deputy, would swagger in, head erect, contemptuous of everyone and everything, with a worshiping young comradess on his arm. From there he would adjourn to Justus Schwab's beer garden, where the host, Comrade Schwab, huge of body and booming of voice, served seidels of beer and platters of pretzels. There the Austrian and German comrades sang folk songs, college songs, and songs of revolution, while they guzzled the beer and munched the pretzels.

The world of these dreamers and frustrated revolutionaries would have remained calm and serene had it not been that a libidinous bundle of energy was suddenly catapulted into this peaceful puddle of muddled minds. The bundle of energy came from Rochester.

Comrade Chavelle (Eve–Emma) Goldman, being a new convert, emancipated herself from all binding conventions and assumed all the irresponsibilities of anarchism. She considered herself in great company, and her leader, Comrade Herr Most, she worshiped as a great hero. She was lavish with her attentions, so much so that the aging Herr Most became jealous of the youthful Chaver Berkman, called him an arrogant Jew and *Gruenschnabel,* and fired him from his job as typesetter. In retaliation, Berkman denounced Most as a braggart and a coward, who preached "action by deed," but who was actually afraid to do anything. The result was Berkman's *attentat* on the life of Frick, the details of which can be read in any textbook in American history.

It is quite possible that if a certain gentleman in Rochester, to whom Chaverte Chavelle had been married for a short while, had possessed a little more charm, there would have been no attempt on the life of Henry Clay Frick, Alexander Berkman would not have spent most of his life in prison, and the press would have been deprived of daily sensations provided by Chaverte Chavelle.

WEDNESDAY, July 30, 1902, was a day of sorrow and mourning for the Jewish community of the East Side and of New York City, and a day of great anxiety to the Jews of the entire country. It was also an important day in the life of my cousin Beril.

The Chief Rabbi, Jacob Joseph, died in the early hours of Wednesday morning. When the news of the rabbi's death reached the Jewish community of the East Side, most of the business houses, stores, and factories closed until after the funeral, and the synagogues began to fill up with mourners who recited psalms for the repose of the dead. In conformance with Orthodox custom, hurried funeral arrangements were made to inter the deceased before sundown of the day of his passing.

The city officials took cognizance of the passing of a Jewish dignitary, and flags were ordered lowered to half-mast over the City Hall and other public buildings. Mayor Seth Low delegated his secretary, Mr. James B. Reynolds, head worker of the University Settlement on Eldridge Street, to represent the city administration at the funeral. Orders were hurriedly given to the Chief of Police to make proper arrangements to handle the thousands expected to assemble on the route of the funeral.

When the funeral procession began to wend its slow and dignified way, making the rounds of the East Side synagogues, more than fifty thousand mourning people, according to police estimates, lined the narrow streets. The funeral passed in silence —only occasional sobs, and the jingling of the *tz'doka* (charity) boxes, and the cry of *tz'doka tatzil mi moves* ("charity saves from death") could be heard.

The bier was borne on the shoulders of the mourners in the old Orthodox manner, with halts every few steps to change pall bearers. The first synagogue in the line of march was the Beth Ha-midrash Ha-godol on Norfolk Street. Here the bier was carried inside the shul, where special prayers were recited and eulogies delivered. From the Beth Ha-midrash the cortege proceeded slowly to the Allen Street shul, from there to the Forsythe Street shul, to the Henry Street shul, near Catherine Street, and from there to the Kalavarier shul on Pike Street near East Broadway, where Cantor Cooper sang *El Molei Rachamim* and recited psalms from the steps of the shul. Here the bier was placed inside a hearse and proceeded slowly down Henry Street to Rutgers Street. It passed the Catholic church, where the priest stood in front of the open doors to do honor to a neighbor and a saintly man.

The hearse was followed by a *minyan* of orphans from the Henry Street Orphan Asylum, all reciting psalms, and behind them came numerous horse-drawn carriages carrying rabbis and other dignitaries. These, in turn, were followed by a long procession of men, women, and children of all ages. When it reached Rutgers Square the cortege turned east on East Broadway. This street was black with people, the police vainly trying to keep them on the sidewalk. The procession stopped momentarily in front of the Educational Alliance, and then proceeded eastward towards the Grand Street Ferry which would carry the rabbi across the river to Greenpoint and his final resting place.

Slowly the procession reached the small triangular "square" where Grand Street merges with East Broadway, and there, from inside the R. H. Hoe and Company printing-press factory, trouble started. Stones and rubbish, followed by steel nuts and bolts, began to rain down from inside the factory on the hearse and the assembled crowds.

After a moment of shocked amazement, and before the police had time to do anything, a rush was made for the factory, and soon young men, followed by bearded men and many women, old and young, were inside the Hoe offices. Desks were overturned in the rush to reach the inside of the plant, where workers were beaten and valuable machinery damaged. Finally the police, using their clubs indiscriminately, pushed the invaders out of the building, in an effort to restore order. The procession, after this interruption, resumed its slow march to the ferry.

For the night of the 30th of July, the Anarchistlech had arranged a *chazer* party to show the Orthodox what they thought of the Chief Rabbi. My cousin, Chaver Beril, when notified in the early morning, agreed to attend the party. However, his place of employment being closed, he decided to watch the funeral procession, and took a place of vantage near the black-draped John F. Ahearn Club, close to the R. H. Hoe building. When the hoodlumism broke loose, Chaver Beril suddenly forgot his feud with the Chief Rabbi, and was among the first to rush the factory, where he fought like a lion. When it was over, he was out on the street, with a big knob on the back of his head from a policeman's neutral club. The rest of the afternoon he walked around in a daze. He couldn't believe that a "pogrom" had happened on his beloved boulevard, the East Broadway of his rhapsody.

That evening and night, East Broadway was crowded with dazed and frightened people, taking little solace in the fact that the press of the entire country condemned the outrage. "Here too?" they asked of each other. The Brotherly Beneficial and Kultur Society was in darkness. Only the Anarchistlech were at their usual frolic, eating ham sandwiches, drinking milk, and singing obscene parodies of Hasidic melodies.

Suddenly a brick came flying through one of the two front windows, followed by a dozen more. The first brick was heaved by a renegade, ex-Chaver Beril, whose name has since become anathema in anarchist legend, and the second by Kid Bernstein, a well-known boxer of that day. There followed a rush into the clubrooms. The more fortunate world revolutionists jumped out of the back windows and saved themselves by climbing over fences out to deserted Division Street, where they merged with the darkness and became lost forever to the holy cause. Those in front jumped into the arms of outraged people and received bad beatings before they were rescued by the police. The clubrooms were a shambles, and the landlord refused to rent the premises again to *radikalen*. Thus ends the story of the Anarchistlech on East Broadway.

My cousin, Mr. Beril Kaminsky, was arrested in the melee, remained in Ludlow Street Jail all night, and in the morning Magistrate Breen, in Essex Market Court, complimented him and dismissed the case. Selma and her father were waiting for him in the courtroom.

That night my cousin Beril came over to our house where he kept his few belongings, and dug out his discarded *arba-kanfus*, his *tefilim* and *talis*, which my mother had been saving for his possible reconversion. He became a regular attendant at the Minsker shul, where his employer, Selma's father, was an official, and before the year was out he was married to Selma and became a junior partner in the paper business.

It was on his honeymoon in the Catskill Mountains that he wrote the forty-first and final stanza of his great masterpiece, and I quote from the volume of his collected poems which he had printed, at his own expense:

*Auf di berge, mein geliebte, krich mit mir,*
*Dorten vu di tzigen meken nur far dir,*
*Vu di hertz iz freilech, un di liebe brent,*
*Vu yeder Sadie iz a lady un yeder Sam a gent.*

("Upon the hills, O my love, climb with me,
There where the goats bleat only for thee,
Where the heart is carefree and love is heaven-sent
Where every Sadie is a lady and every Sam a gent.")

# CEDARS OF LEBANON

## RASHI ON THE CREATION

### *Selections from the Great Jewish Teacher*

Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes, better known as Rashi, who lived in the 11th century, is beyond question the greatest of all Jewish teachers and educators. His commentaries on the Bible and the Talmud were for centuries the textbooks of a people, and the basis of Jewish learning and of Jewish piety was felt to be "*chumash* [Pentateuch] with Rashi." The first printed Hebrew book was Rashi's commentary on the Torah.

Rashi's genius was that he could be simple to the simple and complex to the complex—all at the same time, and even in the same sentence. His commentary struck a mean between the literal, common-sense interpretation of the text (*p'shat*) and imaginative speculation (*d'rash*). He thus democratized Jewish education by making the sacred books available to the beginning student at the same time that he preserved the complexities of traditional Midrashic exegesis.

To be truly understood and appreciated, Rashi must be read in the original Hebrew. First, because he is the master of a hard and compact style that is one of the treasures of Hebrew literature. Second, because so much of his exegesis is dependent upon puns, double meanings, ambiguities, and the very spelling in the text of the Bible and the Talmud. But the modern reader's introduction to Rashi has been made immeasurably easier by the recent appearance of an edition of the Pentateuch with Rashi's commentary and an interlinear English translation, published by the S. S. and R. Publishing Company, Brooklyn, N. Y. (Genesis and Exodus have been completed, and the rest will follow shortly; the price is $3.50 per volume.) This translation has been consulted—though not always followed—in preparing the following selections.

In English, Rashi may seem to some readers a little odd: the translation is not only into another language but into another spiritual atmosphere altogether. Though some of Rashi's problems (e.g., the dual name of God, *adonai* and *elohim*) are those faced by modern Biblical criticism, his solution is quite different. For he accepted the text as divinely inspired in its every letter, and worked on the premise that, as he states, "the world was created with the Hebrew language." His exegesis is homiletical, not objective, for he believes that Scripture teaches morals as well as truth—indeed that truth and morality are one and the same. Every letter and phrase of the text poses a significant problem of the divine meaning and the divine intention.

Some of his seemingly trivial points conceal important principles: for instance, the first comment printed here, which is a considerably shortened version of the original, aims to establish the fact that Scripture is not chronological—thereby overcoming many apparent contradictions in the text (such as the two creations in Genesis), and making it possible for the commentator to use later material in order to explain earlier passages.—Ed.

In the beginning (*b'reshit*) created God (Gen. 1:1).

This text is not to be grasped without interpretation, as our rabbis interpret it: [the creation was] for the sake of the Torah, for it is called (Prov. 8:22) "the beginning of His way"; and for the sake of Israel, for they are called (Jer. 2:3) "the beginning of His harvest." And if you come to explain it plainly, explain it thus: At the beginning of the creation of heaven and earth, and the earth was unformed and void, and darkness, etc., God said, "Let there be light." For the text does not come to teach the order of creation, to say that these [heaven and earth] came first; for if it came to teach this, it would have been written: "first" (*barishona*) He created the heavens, etc. For you do not find the word *reshit* in Scripture when it is not in the construct state [beginning *of*] to the word after it. . . . So here you should say: in the beginning of His creating. And if you will say the text comes to teach that these [heaven and earth] were created first then be astonished at yourself. For indeed the waters came first, for it is written: "and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters." And Scripture has not yet revealed when was the creation of the waters. From this you learn that the waters preceded the earth. Furthermore, the heavens (*shamayim*) were created from fire (*esh*) and water (*mayim*). So you are forced to admit that Scripture does not teach any order of earlier and later.

IN THE BEGINNING GOD (*elohim*) CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH (Gen. 1:1).

And it was not written, "the Lord (*adonai*) created," because at first He was minded to create it [the world] in the quality of Justice; but He saw that the world would not endure; so He gave precedence to the quality of Mercy and united it with the quality of Justice, and thus it is written: "in the day that the Lord (*adonai*) [of Mercy] God (*elohim*) [of Justice] made earth and heaven" (Gen. 2:4).

AND GOD SAW THE LIGHT THAT IT WAS GOOD (Gen. 1:4).

Here, too, we need the words of the Agada: He saw that it was improper that the wicked make use of it, and He set it apart for the righteous in the future to come.

AND GOD SAID: LET THERE BE A FIRMAMENT IN THE MIDST OF THE WATERS (Gen. 1:16).

Let the firmament be firm; for although the heavens were created on the first day, they were still fluid; and they congealed on the second day at the rebuke of the Holy One, blessed be He, when He said: "Let there be a firmament." And so it is written (Job 26:11): "the pillars of heaven shook"—throughout the first day; and on the second, "they were astonished at his rebuke"; like a man who is shocked and stands at a rebuke from one who frightens him.

AND GOD CREATED THE GREAT SEA-MONSTERS (Gen. 1:21).

Great fish which are in the sea; and in the words of the Agada, this is Leviathan and his mate. For He created them male and female and killed the female and salted her for the righteous of the future to come; for if they were fruitful and multiplied, the world would not endure because of them.

AND GOD SAID: LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE (Gen. 1:26).

From this we learn the humility of the Holy One, blessed be He. Because man was to be created in the likeness of angels, and they would envy him; therefore He took counsel with them. . . . He said to them: There are higher beings in my likeness; if there are no lower beings in my likeness, lo!—there would be envy in the creation.

AND GOD SAID: LET *US* MAKE MAN (Gen. 1:26).

Even though they did not assist Him in His creating, and this is an occasion for heretics to make use of the "us," Scripture does not shrink from teaching us good conduct and the quality of humbleness, that the great should take counsel with and seek permission from the small. . . . And the answer to the heretics is written close by: "and He created man" (1:27), and it is not written: "and they created."

AND GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS IMAGE (Gen. 1:27).

In the mold made for him: for everything was created by God's word, but he was created by God's hands; as it is said (Ps. 139:5): "And Thou hast laid Thy hand upon me."

MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM (Gen. 1:27).

Further on it is said (Gen. 2:21): "and He took one of his ribs, etc." Midrash Agada says He created him two-faced in the first creation and after that divided him. And the plain meaning of the text is: Here you are taught that both of them were created on the sixth day, and it does not explain to you the manner of their creation, and that is explained to you later on.

AND GOD SAID UNTO THEM: BE FRUITFUL AND FILL THE EARTH AND SUBDUE IT (*v'kibshuha*) (Gen. 1:28).

The *vav* [in *kibshuha*] is lacking [and it may therefore be read: *v'kabshah*—he shall subdue her]. This is to teach you that the male subdues the female and she is not to be a gadabout. And this is also to teach you that the man, whose way is to subdue, is commanded to be fruitful and multiply, and not the woman.

AND IT WAS EVENING AND IT WAS MORNING, THE SIXTH DAY (*yom ha-shishi*) (Gen. 1:31).

The letter *he* [the definite article which also stands for the number five] is added to *shishi* [to make up *ha-shishi—the* sixth, whereas on previous days the definite article is omitted] at the completing of the work of creation to teach that He came to terms with them [the works of creation] on condition that Israel would accept the five books of the Torah. Another interpretation: They all stood suspended until the sixth day, that is, the sixth of Sivan [when Israel accepted the Torah]. . . .

AND EVERY SHRUB OF THE FIELD WAS NOT YET IN THE EARTH (Gen. 2:5).

. . . As for the passage where it is written (Gen. 1:24): "Let the earth bring forth"—they did go forth, but remained at the openings of the ground.

AND THE LORD GOD FORMED (*va-yyitser*) THE MAN OF DUST OF THE GROUND (Gen. 2:7).

[The double *y* indicates] two creations; a creation for this world and a creation for the resurrection of the dead. But for the animal, which does not stand before final judgment, two *y*'s are not written in describing its creation.

DUST OF THE GROUND (Gen. 2:7).

God collected the dust from all over the earth, from the four corners, so that wherever he dies, it would receive him for burial. . . .

AND THE LORD GOD SAID: IT IS NOT GOOD THAT THE MAN SHOULD BE ALONE (Gen. 2:18).

So that it should not be said, there is a dual authority: the Holy One, blessed be He, among higher beings, is one, without a mate; and this one among lower beings is without a mate.

I WILL MAKE HIM A HELP OPPOSITE HIM (*k'negdo*) (Gen. 2:18).

If she is virtuous, she is a help. If she is not virtuous, she is opposite him, in strife.

AND THE LORD GOD FORMED OUT OF THE GROUND EVERY BEAST OF THE FIELD (Gen. 2:19).

This "forming" is the "making" previously mentioned (Gen. 1:25): "And God made the beast of the earth, etc." But it is repeated here to explain that the winged creatures were created from the slime; for it is said previously they were created from the waters, and here it says from the earth.

AND THE LORD GOD BUILT THE RIB WHICH HE HAD TAKEN FROM THE MAN INTO A WOMAN (Gen. 2:22).

Like a building, wide below and narrow above to contain the child, like a storehouse of wheat which is wide below and narrow above, so that its burden will not be too heavy for its walls.

AND THE MAN SAID: THIS IS NOW BONE OF MY BONE AND FLESH OF MY FLESH (Gen. 2:23).

This teaches that Adam came unto every beast and animal and was not satisfied in them.

SHE SHALL BE CALLED WOMAN (*isha*) BECAUSE OUT OF MAN (*ish*) WAS SHE TAKEN (Gen. 2:23).

The one word comes from the other. Thus we know that the world was created with the Hebrew language.

THEREFORE SHALL A MAN LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE UNTO HIS WIFE (Gen. 2:24).

The Holy Spirit says this to forbid lewdness to the children of Noah.

# ON THE HORIZON

## SHERWOOD ANDERSON AND THE POWER URGE

### *A Note on Populism in American Literature*

### IRVING HOWE

SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S first novel, *Windy McPherson's Son,* is a direct reflection of his personal problems at the time he wrote it. He was then a paint manufacturer in Elyria, Ohio, and had not yet made his famous break from bourgeois respectability, which, as it happened, involved also a nervous breakdown. While still uncertain about the values by which he wished to live, he was already dubious about the accepted business creed. The only part of *Windy McPherson's Son* that now seems authentic as fiction is its opening portrait of small-town life in late 19th-century America, but the novel as a whole is interesting as a direct and unvarnished expression of a discontented business man who wishes, somehow, to reconcile the life of accumulation with a morality of natural love.

In his second novel, *Marching Men,* Anderson took a step further on the path of discontent. *Marching Men* shows no confidence in the intentions of enlightened business men, but rather urges the more violent view that the nation can be righted only by a charismatic leader who will whip the masses into revolt. Like *Windy,* it begins as a crude *Entwicklungsroman,* a novel of "development": Beaut McGregor, a powerful gawky boy, revolts against the de-energized passivity of Coal Creek, a Pennsylvania mining town. Though revering the memory of his father, a martyred miner, he despises the miners *en masse,* somewhat like a Lawrencian hero, for their drab acceptance of misery. When he leaves Coal Creek to make his fortune in Chicago, he looks back "full of hate . . . he might have wished that all of the people of the town had but one head so that he might cut it off. . . ." But, if we are to believe Anderson, McGregor's misanthropic feeling toward the miners is dissolved when he returns to Coal Creek to watch them form a spontaneous parade of honor at his mother's funeral. Like all of Anderson's heroes, McGregor experiences a moment of intense perception that changes the entire course of his life: ". . . he had of a sudden one of those strange awakenings . . . he tried vainly to get back his old satisfying hate of the town and the miners but it would not come . . . they like himself were marching up out of the smoke and the little squalid houses, away from the shores of the blood-red river into something new." The transformed McGregor is to be the people's liberator.

In Chicago he becomes the leader of a movement known as the "marching men," a group of workers united in dumb brotherhood to find "the secret of order in the midst of this disorder." The world, cries McGregor,

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IN THE work of Sherwood Anderson, IRVING HOWE finds a vein of authoritarianism and love of power which throws some illumination on the complexity of the Populist tradition in American literature, so often assumed to be the purest expression of democratic ideals. Mr. Howe was born in New York City in 1920 and has published literary criticism in COMMENTARY, *Partisan Review, The Nation,* and other periodicals. He is at present working on a book-length study of Sherwood Anderson for the American Men of Letters Series published by William Sloane; this short piece is adapted from a section of that work.

"should become a great camp. . . . Why should some men not begin the organization of a new army? If there are men who do not understand what is meant let them be knocked down."

When McGregor is asked the destination of his marching men, he answers, apparently to Anderson's satisfaction, in a free-verse leaflet:

*They ask us what we mean.*
*Well, here is our answer.*
*We mean to go on marching . . .*
*We will not talk nor listen to talk. . . .*

At a vast Labor Day parade McGregor tells his followers that if one of them "whines or complains or stands upon a box throwing words about, knock him down and keep marching." True to his monomaniacal creed, McGregor beats up a tired follower and warns him, "This is no time for words." At the novel's end the movement collapses for reasons that are never clear, perhaps because Anderson hadn't the faintest notion of what to do with it. But McGregor is in no way diminished or disparaged as a popular leader, and even the capitalist responsible for his defeat wonders whether he was not right after all.

It is impossible to read this novel today without a slight shudder, for history has lent Anderson's marching men a significance he could hardly have intended. Yet the novel has been charitably ignored or misconstrued by almost all of Anderson's critics, whether because they have not read it or read it with increasing embarrassment, one does not know. When it first appeared in 1917, Francis Hackett reviewed it in the *New Republic* as "a graphic proletarian novel," and the socialist *Liberator*, which should have known better, called it "a novel of ideas." In an essay written in the 1920's, the radical critic V. F. Calverton described *Marching Men* as "radiantly and romantically symbolic of the rise of the proletariat." And in a recent highly sympathetic study of Anderson, which could have been based on historical perspective, Maxwell Geismar has conspicuously glossed over the novel's totalitarian bias. Such misreadings can be traced less to the inadequate sensibilities of these critics than to their wish to preserve an image of Anderson, justified in other contexts, as a deeply plebeian and democratic writer.

Though the portrait of McGregor uncritically anticipates the power-worship, the manipulable irrationality, and the asexual fanaticism of modern totalitarian leaders, it would be absurd and melodramatic to conclude that Anderson was a fascist or forerunner of fascism at the time he wrote the novel. All of his political-moral inclinations were always to be quite in the other direction, and he himself was to look back with a curious blend of dread and awe to *Marching Men.* The theme of the novel was never again to appear in any of his writings, and *Poor White,* to cite one example, was to be characterized precisely by an opposite attitude to power and to human beings. What then is the source of the painful ideas in *Marching Men*? One may point to literary influences—Carlyle, mentioned favorably in an article Anderson wrote several years before *Marching Men,* and Jack London, whose Nietzschean notions were then floating through the American intellectual atmosphere—but surely these could hardly account for so thorough a defense of political mindlessness as *Marching Men.*

In part, the novel can be related to Anderson's personal situation. If *Windy McPherson's Son* represents his struggle to make a value-choice in the world of American business, *Marching Men* releases his resentment at the need to think through to that choice. Where *Windy,* because of its intellectual confusion, is limp and diffuse in feeling, *Marching Men* is full of spastic aggression and sadism which reflect undifferentiated anger at the burdens imposed by modern life. And where the earlier novel portrays sexual indecision, the later one conveys a scorn of women and celebrates the brotherhood of a potentially homosexual band. All of these signs of personal crisis were to come to a climax in Anderson's breakdown in 1912.

Yet one feels a need to relate the novel to something more than Anderson's immediate situation, to account for its politics in terms of political influences. Here one can only speculate, and the beginning of such speculation must be the assumption that the ideas of the novel are related to the intellectual currents of those years in the late 19th century when Anderson reached his manhood. Is it then too shocking a violation of the American democratic myth to suggest that some of the emotional qualities, if not the explicit program, of Anderson's marching men may be traced back to Populism? That the great-man theory finds favor only among the upper classes is a misconception recent history has quite dispelled: the wealthy scorn a parvenu messiah, except perhaps during moments of extreme social crisis. Actually, the search for a leader who through the exertion of his will can lead the helpless and confused out of the wilderness is distinctly though not exclusively plebeian, very often related to a lower-middle-class desire, which is shared by declassed elements, for a violently dynamic alternative to radicalism. And in *Marching Men* Anderson contemptuously refers to socialists as people who merely wag their jaws, which is precisely the way a modern totalitarian speaks of those of his opponents who profess to base their views on reason.

It is commonly believed that the Populist movement was a righteous democratic uprising of the people against the trusts and railroads—which, in part, it certainly was. But in Populism there was also an insistently programmatic mindlessness, a mindlessness that was often its only program; a xenophobic scorn of city slickers and intellectual "longhairs" who "jawed" about ideas when immediate action was needed; an occasional stereotyped identification of the Jew with the odious Wall Street bankers; a sentimental glorification of mere solidarity at the expense of thought; and a prostrating infatuation with the eloquent leader whose voice cried out against crosses of gold and spoke for the inarticulate surge in the hearts of his followers. With the exception of the occasional anti-Semitism, all of these traits are present in *Marching Men,* though they are placed in an urban milieu and presented with a crude harshness no Populist could accept. To suggest that Anderson's novel provides a historically faithful portrait of Populism would be merely malicious, but it does not seem at all malicious to say that it reveals a usually ignored aspect of that movement. The blend of leader-worship and impatience with ideas that is present in *Marching Men* is also to be found in the undersides of Populism; it comprises an authoritarian potential which is buried deep within, and censored by the "superego" of, a certain kind of plebeian revolt.

As a novel, even for a study of Anderson's apprenticeship, *Marching Men* is of slight interest, but as an expression of ideas it remains highly relevant. It represents the price Anderson was to pay, and which he never quite reckoned, for his failure to assume the responsibilities of the mind; a price he would pay again and again.

# THE STUDY OF MAN

## THE STATISDEMON

### *1955—and After*

### SAMUEL YELLEN

WE NOW find it hard to believe that the recent disaster came upon us so fast. Nor can we tell for sure when the thing began. It was first brought to public attention just two years ago, towards the close of the 1955 basketball season, when the man who conducted a syndicated rating index for college basketball teams was suddenly struck with the realization that his predictions were proving 100 per cent accurate. In his defense, it must be said that he had never made extravagant claims for his ratings of relative strength. He was always careful to state that they were based on records of past performance, and that they took no account of such variables as injuries, school spirit, home court, ineligibilities, and temperamental vagaries. While a team with a power rating of 60 had a theoretical 10-point scoring advantage over one with a rating of 50, that was no guarantee of winning the game.

Nevertheless, in spite of these modest demurrers, not only were the predictions as to victory coming true, but the final scores *duplicated* the rating index exactly. Thus the score of the Duquesne (74.0)—Villanova (72.0) game was 74 to 72, and of the California (67.0)—Stanford (66.0) game was 67 to 66. Thousands of fans wrote in to point out the amazing success of the index. It was observed also that once a team with a rating carried to the first decimal place—such as Kentucky (74.1) or St. Louis (67.9)—arrived at the integer score, it was thereafter unable to shoot another basket. Yet the ball appeared to make a determined effort to score a fractional basket. It would seem to go into the hoop, but would roll around the rim a number of times (corresponding to the figure in the decimal place) and then fall out again.

Although the general run of basketball fans are not mathematically sophisticated, most of them did grasp the implications. Suppose that a team of 68.8 power were to meet a 68.5 team. Could either one ever win? The test came very soon with the Ohio State (78.9)—Holy Cross (78.5) game. It was fast and close, and about seven minutes from the end the score went into the 60's. As the 70's approached, hysteria gripped the fans and nervousness palsied the players. Finally, with two full minutes to go, the score stood at 78 all. Surely another score could not be avoided and the jinx would be broken. But no! Suddenly the shooting grew erratic and the game turned into a comedy of errors. Set-ups, lay-ins, and free throws were missed wildly. Once an Ohio State man threw what looked like a sure basket, only to have the ball roll around the hoop nine times and come out again. The same sort of thing hap-

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This is the month when school lets out, and students and teachers traditionally kick up their heels a bit. This department—given over the year round to sober discussion of achievement in the social sciences—here permits itself an excursion into the realm of fantasy. Whether the apparition presented belongs to its author alone, or whether it may represent a dim shape that comes to haunt all social scientists in the early hours of the morning, we cannot say. Samuel Yellen, who is associate professor of English at Indiana University, has published stories, sketches, and poetry in numerous periodicals, including the *Yale Review, New Yorker, American Mercury, Antioch Review.* Mr. Yellen was born in Vilna in 1906. He took his degrees at Western Reserve University and Oberlin College.

pened to Holy Cross. Was it merely jitters? Or was some supernatural agency operating? Whatever the cause, the game went into three overtime periods, but neither team could score again. The players were exhausted and completely unstrung. For the first time in basketball history, the referees called the game off, with the score tied at 78.

Contrary to what might have been expected, there was no uproar in the stands. Instead, as scoreless overtime followed scoreless overtime, an unnatural hush fell upon the spectators. They talked in subdued whispers. And when the game was at last called off, they unfolded their overcoats and silently stole away. The editorials in the morning papers ranged from veiled charges of collusion to dire warnings of divine retribution for the increase in juvenile delinquency. Statistical experts at Ohio State, when interviewed, pooh-poohed the notion of a supernatural agency and attributed the strange results to a kind of mass self-hypnosis. However, the next night the same thing happened when Missouri (68.6) met Bowling Green (68.2). Again the game went into three scoreless overtime periods, and finally had to be called off as a tie.

At first this phenomenon did not appear to extend beyond the realm of basketball, though a few of the more discerning sports writers quickly realized that perhaps here lay the explanation, if such it could be called, for certain baffling occurrences during the past football season. Commentators had already remarked that never before had so many field goals (at three points each) and safeties (at two points each) been made in a single season. One inquiring reporter went back over the records of the games and compared them with the predictions of a widely syndicated rating for college football. He discovered that apparently teams had been *compelled* by some unknown power to be consistent with the predictions. Hence, when Notre Dame had been rated 23 to Southern California's 17, the final score actually turned up as 23 to 17, even though, in order to accomplish this, Notre Dame had to score a freak safety in addition to its three touchdowns, and Southern California had to kick a 43-yard field goal at a queer angle against a strong cross-wind.

Revelations of this sort did cause some buzzing among the sports antiquarians. But soon after the close of the 1955 basketball season, both popular interest and the sense of alarm died down. For a month or two the whole thing was forgotten, except for a few belated cartoons; and magazines which had commissioned articles on amazing coincidences of bygone days wrote off the advances as a bad investment. However, people gradually became aware that the predictions and statements made by widely circulated advertisements, *if presented in numbers,* were coming true. For example, whenever five persons met together, instantly four of them began to bleed at the gums—evidently infected with pyorrhea. Similarly, it was noted among doctors that when four of their profession got together—whether for a consultation or a game of golf—inevitably, three would find themselves agreeing fatuously yet vociferously that a certain brand of cigarette did not irritate the throat.

The matter was no longer merely trivial or amusing. People grew afraid to assemble in small groups, and, indeed, shunned any gathering unless the number was an uncommon one like 17 or 29. Invariably in groups up to 10 or 12, something terrible or ludicrous or humiliating happened to one or more of those present. A woman might be on the instant afflicted with acid stomach or a severe headache. Likewise, a man might find himself having to brush dandruff from his shoulders or with a decidedly unpleasant film on his teeth. Whatever the event, investigation usually showed that somewhere at some time the causative prediction or statement had been published *in numbers.*

As the apprehension spread, people refused to get into elevators, unless it was one at a time. Automobiles might as well have been one-seaters, for other persons would not join the driver. Hostesses had trouble with guest lists, and the small dinner party practically became extinct. One enterprising firm began to publish lists of "safe" numbers, such as 14, 16, 17, 19, 23, 26, 27, etc. These lists had a wide sale: soon no one would be without them. But they had to be revised constantly and kept up to date. As a specific number was found by experience to be "unsafe," it was struck from the list, and an expert was set to searching for the original culpable statement or prediction. The sources of trouble were not always advertisements. In fact, many unsafe numbers were traced back to government reports or to the learned journals of sociologists, psychologists, and economists who had grown enamored of the precision of statistics and figures.

A mortal blow was dealt the lists when one psychologist, having worked out the psychological probability, published his findings that 2 out of every 37 gatherings based on the so-called safe numbers were likely to prove unsafe. The consequence was immediate. Thereafter, at 2 out of every 37 "safe" gatherings, some misfortune occurred, and, what was even worse, the particular numbers involved were in turn "contaminated." One could foresee a day when there would be no safe numbers left.

There was, of course, much speculation as to what was really going on. It was noted that America was the only country thus afflicted. And it was recalled how foreigners visiting us had often remarked upon our reverence for figures and statistics. No one could say who the original offender among advertisers was, though it may well have been Ivory Soap with its claim to be 99.44 per cent pure. Certainly the learned journals had the same fundamental reverence. It was numbers for numbers' sake and percentages for percentages' sake. Thus, brakes stopped with 35 per cent less effort, automobiles had 20.7 per cent less air drag, television blacks were 58 per cent deeper, and tooth powder made teeth 38 per cent brighter.

Of all the hypotheses suggested, two were given the greatest credence. One asserted that the sheer belief of so many people in figures and statistics had generated an occult dynamic which saw to it that every prediction and statement published in the form of numbers went into effect. It was *Time* magazine, the principal exponent of this hypothesis, which brilliantly coined the name "Statisdemon" for the extra-sensory power behind the scenes. The other view, perhaps with more scientific basis, held that by some means a cluster of electronic impulses had got loose from one of our new super-calculators and continued to operate in the upper air in a manner still not understood.

Whatever the reason, dismay spread rapidly through the nation. A few ruthless individuals and firms were quick to take advantage of the unknown force. They printed full-page ads with figures predicting the universal sale of their products. And instantly there arose in the public a compulsion to buy in accordance with the prediction. Despite protests and warnings, other firms followed this example. There could be no doubt that trade was stimulated, and soon a super-boom was on. Many of the leading economists gave this new development their blessing and saw in it the means of insuring an ever continuing prosperity. In fact, one Harvard professor announced: "The Statisdemon has given Free Enterprise a shot in the arm." Of course, objections and clashes could not be avoided. When one watch, for example, claimed that its new mainspring eliminated 99 per cent of all watch repairs due to steel mainspring failures, there was an outcry from the National Association of Watch Repairmen. The consuming public, too, complained that its homes were becoming cluttered with the commodities it was compelled to buy, whether it needed and wished them or not, and whether it could afford them or not.

However, it was not long before the full scope of the impending disaster began to strike home, even among advertisers. Probably the first profound realization came after one of the principal airlines stated that its flagships completed 95.2 out of every 100 scheduled miles. Presently, its flagships began to drop from the sky or to fall apart bizarrely at exactly 95.2 miles after the take-off; and soon the airline dared not schedule a flight of more than 99.9 miles. But the greatest panic followed the publication of life-expectancy figures by a leading insurance company. Thereafter, no matter what their state of health, every woman fell dead at precisely 68.3 years, and every man at 67.1. Curiously enough, the only agency which enjoyed immunity from the Statisdemon was the Gallup Poll. Its statements and predictions produced no effect whatsoever.

Now, at long last, the President and Congress are aware that drastic action must be taken. Such is the intention behind the President's radio talk to the nation a week ago, which began so dramatically: "There is no safety in numbers." The President himself has drawn up a bill, for, as we know, during the past year neither the Cabinet nor the Congressional committees have ventured to assemble. The bill prohibits the publication of any statement or prediction which includes or involves figures, numbers, percentages, or statistics. Moreover, it provides for the ultimate destruction of all calculating machines and numeral type-faces. But how the President will get the law passed remains extremely uncertain. For only last night a prominent Washington columnist rushed into print with the statement: "I predict that 65 per cent of Congress will vote against the President's bill."

# LETTERS FROM READERS

## Israel: The Religious Question

To the Editor of Commentary:

The essential difference between Milton Konvitz ("A Plea for Religious Freedom in Israel," Commentary, October 1949) and religious Zionists lies less in the details he mentions than in principles and outlook. We mean completely different things by such terms as "the Jewish people," "Judaism," "Zionism," and "the Jewish state," and I would like to explain what I mean by these terms before answering Mr. Konvitz's charges.

First, "the Jewish people" do not owe their existence, as do other peoples, to the fact that they form a concentration of people in a given territory. They existed as a people even when dispersed, and the purpose of their present concentration within the State of Israel is not to create a new people but to enable an existing people to live their own way of life. In other words, to the Jewish people, their country was always a means to an end—living a Jewish way of life, which implies not only the observance of the laws between man and God, but those governing the relations between man and man which are to be found in the Torah. Wherever individuals or groups relinquish this Jewish way of life, they are sooner or later assimilated and lost to the Jewish people.

Torah is not a religion within the popular meaning of the word. It does not consist of religious dogmas which are the concern of individuals, but is the code of life of an entire people whose existence can only be assured when its social, economic, and political structure is founded on and in accordance with it. When a member of the Jewish people casts off the responsibilities demanded by Torah, that is not his private concern, for his action constitutes a threat to the existence of the Jewish people.

Secondly, "Judaism" is not a set of abstract moral teachings arrived at through a belief in God, but it is the belief that the Almighty created the universe, and it is a specific form of life which governs the daily conduct of the individual, whether at work, in commerce, or in the family circle, and his relations to his people and his country, and to other peoples. The one aim of this governance by Torah is to guide man and to regulate his way of life so as to prevent his being affected by surrounding temptations. In other words, Judaism means Shabbat, *kashrut,* purity of family life, and the complete structure of social legislation of the Torah.

A Judaism which speaks of Jewish morals but does not lay down the specific obligations of the Jewish individual in his daily conduct is like all the other abstract and ineffectual ideas typical of the 20th century. These ideas glorify the principles of equality, freedom, love of one's neighbor, and independence, but they did not prevent Churchill's government or the Socialist government in England from locking the gates of Eretz Yisrael to those fleeing for their lives; they did not prevent the USSR and the United States from gazing passively on while six million Jews were being marched to the gas chambers. All this and more is the result of abstract moral teachings divorced from concrete laws and teachings. The so-called freedom of our 20th century which Mr. Konvitz and others are so eager to praise was unable to prevent two calamitous world wars.

The United States is certainly governed by more than 613 statutes, and yet is a free country: but while these laws do not lead to the realization of a true ideal of man, practical Judaism does lead to such a realization.

Thirdly, "Zionism" is not only a reaction to persecutions. True Zionism is based on a triple conception: (a) the desire of Jews to live a true Jewish life, which is denied them in the Diaspora; (b) the desire of the Jewish people to create its specific and independent way of life; and (c) the desire of the Jewish people to find an original Jewish solution of present social problems.

It is true there are also Zionists whose Zionism is based on philanthropy: who, because even the United States of America, the most democratic country in the world, is still not prepared to open its gates to Jews, have become Zionists in order to help Jews get to Eretz Yisrael. And there are also Zionists whose desire to come to Israel is based on the fact that the non-Jewish world does not wish to recognize their "goyishness." These "Zionists," however, only possess the trimming of Zionism. Real Zionism involves belief in the Jewish people and the strong determination that it exist again as an independent people in Israel in order to fulfill the ideal of Judaism.

Lastly, "the Jewish state" is not merely the creation of a group of people who have united to guard their safety. Israel is not a state for the inhabitants of Israel alone. It is a state for the Jewish people. True, the statutes of the Jewish people as contained in the Torah give full rights to all the inhabitants of the state, and do not compel non-Jews to a certain way of life — as they do compel the Jews, who, as individuals, have come to Israel in order to fulfill the ideals of the prophets. Jews outside the borders of Israel cannot formally participate in the life of the Jewish state, but nevertheless continue to live those precepts of the Torah governing the relationship between man and his maker, and sooner or later they will unite with the Jewish people in Israel in order to fulfill the complete Jewish way of life, possible only in Eretz Yisrael.

It is perfectly obvious that our approach will not be the same as those who see Israel as a normal state in which a variety of citizens dwell. Seen this way, every individual in Israel may live as he pleases, but if the problem of the state is the problem of the whole Jewish people, then the way of life in the state must provide the people with the possibility of fulfilling in practice the teachings of the prophets. Furthermore, this same way of life involves an interest in securing full freedom for every individual, otherwise the people will not be able to fulfill its mission. This certainly applies to non-Jewish members of the state who are not compelled to observe the Jewish way of life except for the "Seven Commandments of the Sons of Noah," general moral principles without the observance of which ordered civilized life would be impossible.

Now a few words concerning some of the details of Mr. Konvitz's criticism:

1. Mr. Konvitz denies that "Israel will become the cornerstone of the world's structure of civilization and culture." What the future will bring is a question of prophecy, and unfortunately we have no prophets today. It is, however, my profound conviction that this small Jewish people is today anxiously and impatiently yearning for its individual way of life, which can only be realized by the adoption of the social laws of the Torah. Should they be accepted, I am sure the world will learn something from us.

2. I cannot agree with Mr. Konvitz that the Jewish people will not be capable of formulating its own way of life in its own state merely because of the strong influences of the surrounding non-Jewish world. In spite of two thousand years of exile, the Jewish people retained a large measure of the basic principles of its way of life. So long as we keep to the fundamental purpose of Zionism—to become an independent people in Eretz Yisrael—we shall be able to overcome the admittedly strong influences of the surrounding nations. Of course, we are also prepared to learn from all, whether East or West, such virtues as they may possess.

3. From what has just been said, it should be perfectly clear that it is neither possible nor desirable for us to learn from American Jewry the Gentile way of life it has adopted, and which leads to a mild form of assimilation. The Jew in America, as in other parts of the Diaspora, adapts his life in accordance with the laws, customs, and culture of that country in which he happens to be. This is not only natural but must be so. The Jew in Israel will adapt his life according to the laws, customs, and culture of Israel. Nay more, it is quite obvious that an American residing in another country will not there live his normal American way of life but will adapt himself to the laws, customs, and conditions prevalent in the country of his residence—"When in Rome do as the Romans do."

4. Unfortunately, the majority in Israel today is still under the influence of the non-Jewish way of life they adopted in the Diaspora, and is not prepared to fulfill the laws of the Torah. Consequently, the Jewish way of life in Israel has been strictly limited to those laws of the Torah without the adoption of which the people will cease to exist as a Jewish people: these are religious marriages, and the public observance of Shabbat and *kashrut*. There is no compulsion on the individual to observe all the *mitzvot* of the Torah but only these principles, which are essential for the existence of the Jewish people in its state.

These three principles are an absolute necessity, for without them Eretz Yisrael might well be faced with the danger of being populated by two completely separate peoples: the Jewish people, consisting of those adhering to the Torah, and a second assimilated mixture of peoples consisting of Jews, Arabs, and others. The fatal results of such a tragedy are perfectly obvious.

5. In Eretz Yisrael, the problem of Reform congregations and communities does not arise, for Jews do not become Jews by virtue of membership in congregations and synagogues, but by being members of their people, and observing the Israeli state laws.

Similarly, there is no problem here of altering the form of service. Either people pray or they do not pray. And should the question arise concerning a short service for workers and soldiers, etc.—well, the Jews have long been in possession of a law governing "short service." Certainly, there can be no question of the prayers being in any other language but Hebrew. Nor can there be any question of creating new prayers, which have no relationship to the Jewish people. On the other hand, no one would suggest depriving the various sects of their right to exist and live as they please.

6. Mr. Konvitz pleads for tolerance in Israel. My reply is that Israel is probably a more tolerant country than any other as concerns its attitude to those who in their private lives do not observe Jewish laws. What we are in fact demanding, and shall never cease to demand, is that in Israel, public life at least shall be "Jewish." It is not as Mr. Konvitz and others will have it a question of separating religion and state, for it is not a problem of religion and state, but of the Jewish people and its Torah. In other words, Mr. Konvitz would like to see the liquidation of the existence of the Jewish people, and would be satisfied with a state bearing the name of "Israel" whose inhabitants have nothing whatever to do with the Jewish people.

No, Mr. Konvitz, we certainly cannot think of giving up circumcision rites in Israel, for by so doing we would undermine the very roots of the Jewish people.

It is true that after two thousand years without statehood, we have suddenly become faced with very many great problems as to how we can reconstruct our life and government on the basis of Torah. It is true, too, that the gigantic material and scientific progress made by our modern industrial world demands great efforts by those learned in Torah to prevent unnecessary conflicts between Torah and modern ideas.

Indeed, our learned Torah scholars, with the help of men learned in other spheres, are making every effort in order to achieve this purpose. The Hapoel Hamizrachi, especially, is concerning itself today with handling modern social problems in accordance with the Torah. Up to the present day the Hapoel Hamizrachi has succeeded in establishing independent settlements and institutions which in the details of their economic and social development are as modern and up to date as any others in the country. At the same time, the settlers have not been prevented from making the observance of Torah their principal guiding code not only in their own private lives, but also in the life of the *kibbutz* as a whole. The problem of basing the life of the country on the principles of Torah can only be solved when the majority of the population of the state will decide in favor of Torah law. These Torah principles will first and foremost become part and parcel of the Constitution. Torah principles will then be the deciding factors on such questions as those concerning the rights of workers and of women. They will govern every phase of life including the planning of the building of cities and villages; the relationship between landowners and dwellers; national ownership of property and social security; questions of income tax and the legality of strikes; prevention of the exploitation and monopoly of land and wealth; and so on. All these matters must be governed by Jewish jurisprudence, which is based on the ethical, moral, and social principles of the Torah.

One cannot expect solutions to be found overnight; nor are such problems solved by arguments and articles. What must be perfectly clear to all of us is that the Jewish people is coming back to Eretz Yisrael, not merely creating just another state. It is striving to create a *Jewish* state for that historic Jewish people which has stubbornly refused to surrender its existence and which will, in the future, continue to guard its independent existence with the same zeal and determination it has shown in the past.

S. Z. Shragai
Member of the Executive
of the Jewish Agency

Jerusalem

## Mr. Konvitz Replies

To the Editor of Commentary:

Your correspondent is entitled to his views concerning the character of Judaism and the Israeli polity. I have no objection to his believing that Judaism is based on soil and blood (if I understand his views correctly). I would defend his right to maintain his views and to live his life according to the dictates of his conscience. But the moment that he makes use of a policeman to force his views upon his neighbors or to compel them to live according to *his* conscience and *his* views of the character of Judaism, he becomes an enemy of democracy, and a destroyer of freedom of conscience and freedom of the human personality, without which Judaism can become only a caricature of spirituality.

Milton R. Konvitz

Ithaca, New York

# BOOKS IN REVIEW

## The Worldly Jew

Einems Yidishe Machshovos ("Jewish Thought in the 20th Century"). By Melech Ravitch. Montreal, The Book Center. 204 pp. $2.50.

Yidish un Yidishkeit ("Yiddish and Jewishness"). By Yosef Opatoshu. Toronto, Gershon Pomerantz. 100 pp. $2.00.

Kedushah un Gevurah bei Yidn ("Martyrdom and Heroism Among Jews"). By Y. Efroykin. New York, Maisel's Book House. 164 pp. $2.25.

*Reviewed by* Arthur Hertzberg

One of the dominant spiritual necessities of the present moment is to come to terms with the last several centuries of Eastern European creativity, which recently ended so tragically before our eyes. That world must be assimilated into the canon of the tradition and into the stream of Jewish history. Group memory sanctifies what it chooses to retain by creating symbols and myths which become for it the true picture of the hallowed past. Increasingly, a generally accepted image of the Russian-Polish Jew is evolving to represent that time and era. It is crystallized in the form of a talmudist or pious Hasid, intense and God-intoxicated in *kapote* and *shtreimel,* or sometimes mild and tender with patriarchal gray beard, accompanied by a feminine counterpart in kerchief or *sheitel.*

These archetypal fathers and mothers have been illuminated for us through many prisms. The English reader has seen him in the worshipful half-tones of Sholem Asch's *Salvation* and in the tender sunset afterglow of Maurice Samuel's *Prince of the Ghetto,* which mainly presents the least skeptical side of Peretz. Roman Vishniac's camera and Abraham Joshua Heschel's pen combined, in *Polish Jews,* to summarize and evaluate with filial piety this world now gone.

True, the symbolic Eastern European has also been seen through more mundane eyes. Sholom Aleichem and Mendele have highlighted his economic helplessness and Chagall's elongated figures have suggested the overly tense and sometimes grotesque sides of a life that, being human, was not always on the most angelic levels of spiritual perfection. Ansky in *The Dybbuk,* the most famous statement of this world, looks at his heroes with unbounded affection and self-identification, and yet he too is aware of inequalities between rich and poor and he sorrows over lives defeated by the very milieu he so greatly loves.

Yet, despite these qualifications, we usually think in an uncomplicated way of that part of the Jewish spirit which is located in space between the Oder and Dnieper and in time between the 16th and 20th centuries as a firm bastion of religious integrity untouched by heresy or the currents of modernity. This picture is important as an anchor in troubled seas; we can and are turning to it more and more as a reminder of a serene spiritual age. And yet the very unalloyed purity of the symbol creates a barrier. Such remembrance of things past merely widens beyond bridging the great gulf there is between that simple world and our complex and fragmentary contemporary scene.

We tend, in consequence, to seek among the more modern-seeming Westerners for intellectual companions in our present dilemmas. Paris and Vienna seem inevitably more immediate than Warsaw, Lemberg, and Berdichev. We recall that the Emancipation began as a consequence of the French Revolution, that religious reform was the standard of much of German Jewry in the 19th century, and that Zionism, the most important revolutionary Jewish movement of this century, was conceived by the westernized Herzl under the impact of French anti-Semitism as it emerged in the Dreyfus affair.

Unhappily, however, these recollections leave us rather cold. It is not merely that the figures they call to mind, with the exception of Herzl, are not so picturesque or so poignantly embedded in our folk-consciousness as the bearded Eastern Europeans. More important is the fact that the actual situation of the Jew in today's world differs so radically from the optimistic forecasts of the 19th-century disciples of progress. Auschwitz was unthinkable to the German Jewish divines of the school of Geiger or the French Jewish flagbearers of the banner of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. They concerned themselves with making the Jews and Judaism acceptable in a world they profoundly believed was becoming more liberal and individualistic. For the most part they abandoned any emphasis on Jewish group-allegiance, the very allegiance which we have been strengthening under the pressure of dire need.

THUS it is that in the quest for a sense of continuity with a usable past, we turn again to the Eastern European world as the last link of the chain onto which we must weld our own steel.

Yet how much more true and more satisfying the connection would be if we put by the side of the almost canonized talmudists and mystics a small gallery of more recent Jewish types created by the Russian-Polish center! True enough, Russian Jewry before the Bolshevik revolution, and its Polish counterpart until 1939, with their mass expressions of a culture unchanged for centuries, were still unique in this century. But there was also the *veltliche yid*, the worldly Jew, that new Jewish type that was being fashioned in the ghetto alongside the traditional Jew. He varied in his attitude on religion from complete orthodoxy to rabid atheism, and he was almost equally in disagreement with himself about Zionism. In dress and manner he was quite secular and he had schooled himself in the culture of Europe, but all this without surrendering any part of his strong national loyalty to the Jewish people.

THE *veltliche yid* was a tragically short-lived phenomenon, since most of those people perished in the gas chambers, and yet in his brief career of scarcely half a century he perhaps more than any other contemporary force created the Jewish present. This human material contributed the overwhelming majority of the early *halutzim* to Palestine, and, indeed, gave the Zionist point to Herzl's not quite localized vision. Was it not the Russian delegation under Weizmann's leadership which refused to follow Herzl towards accepting the territory of Uganda as even a temporary substitute for the promised land? The modern renaissance in both Yiddish and Hebrew was the literary expression of these last children of the ghetto, and the ferment in Russia and Poland towards a national Jewish labor movement was the yeast of the Histadrut in Israel and the powerful unions of New York.

What is left of this intelligentsia is now rather lonely. It is hard to be the survivor of a place and time and be charged with assaying one's own worth and writing one's own epitaph. Resolutely, however, the literati that remain, consisting mostly of residents in America who are nourished by the inspiration of their East European youth, are seeking for continuity, for their links to the Jewish future. The three books under review were written by such cultural expatriates. Ravitch and Opatoshu face the question of what Jewishness and Judaism can mean to men of their stamp, and Efroykin attempts to analyze the meaning of the recent martyrdom.

RAVITCH is a diffuse writer, an autodidact and confessedly often unclear even to himself. He knows that he is living at the end of an era and he wishes to sum up its values for posterity. He proposes a new book of books which shall canonize the best of the last two millennia of Diaspora creativity, with particular emphasis on Yiddish literature. This modern "Bible" must be secular, for Ravitch rejects the God who did not strike down a Hitler. He knows, however, that God's word has served as the portable fatherland of an international people. In Ravitch's view, despite the new State of Israel, the Jews will continue to be a worldwide cultural nation. Himself both a secularist and a Yiddishist, he wants such a version of Jewish culture to be the common heritage of the future.

There is a good bit of the village atheist about Ravitch and this is not made more palatable by any particular stylistic elegance or any considerable analytic powers. Opatoshu, the author of several classic novels of Jewish Poland, is a more serious essayist.

He is, as well, more respectful to the religious heritage. Yet he, too, sees the world-wide future of Jewish culture as secular and Yiddish. Opatoshu rather blithely ignores the fact that large segments of our people, such as the Arabic-

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speaking Jews of North Africa and the Middle East, have had no contact with Yiddish. He does not seriously face the fact that the language is weakening on the American scene in a manner dangerous to its survival. That it will survive and will be the soul of Jewish continuity is for him an axiom of faith.

The best of these three books is Efroykin's. He is obviously more learned than the other two writers and more capable of sustained thinking. Unlike Ravitch and Opatoshu, he does not attempt a summation of the whole Eastern European experience. The problem Efroykin poses to himself is to investigate the Jewish martyrdom between 1940 and 1945, to assess its character, and to discover what values it created.

With considerable moral courage he dares to assert that Jewish resistance was unheroic when judged by the usual standards of the world. The very glorification of the revolt of the Warsaw ghetto proves to him that it is being celebrated because a resistance movement on the proportions of the Yugoslav or the French did not really exist. People do not, even in extreme situations, choose to court immediate death, so argues Efroykin, unless there is before their eyes an ultimate national purpose which they can vindicate and help to eventual victory. The often murderously uncooperative Polish resistance did not permit many Jews to have any illusions of fighting shoulder to shoulder for a really democratic Poland of the future. There was hence no alternative to the attempt to hang on to life to the very last second and then, in a few places, to die a few days sooner in honor of the idea of struggle. The Warsaw battle, in Efroykin's view, was therefore an act of ultimate noble despair rather than of resistance.

EFROYKIN knows that the Jewish mind and heart rebels against such an evaluation of the tragic death of the six million. We are in need of being able to apply to their martyrdom the glorious phrase *kiddush ha-shem,* "Sanctification of the Divine Name," which Efroykin validates for them by quoting the tradition that any death at the hands of Jew-haters, no matter how it is faced, is such a sanctification. He is, indeed, in no sense a "debunker." Quite the contrary: his pages are obviously often written with scarcely repressed tears. He emphasizes vigorously that in terms of their situation the victims of the Nazis behaved as best they could, and he certainly assumes no right to demand of their memory an example more satisfying to him. What he does deduce from their deaths is that, in the very dying, those who lived for Jewish ideals, particularly the deeply orthodox, faced the end with the greatest courage and dignity.

The ultimate moral of the book is that only on the soil of one's own country is a real national life possible, and that there it is possible even in extreme circumstances. For Efroykin the truth of Zionism is proved, from this point of view, by the contrast between the underground battle with the British in Palestine, which was a full-fledged resistance movement, and the manner in which for the most part the six million of Europe died. Only in Israel is it possible for the Jew to live and die, to win and even to lose, with full national and therefore human honor.

IN these three books, then, viewpoints appear which are at both poles of present thinking about the future of the Jewish people: whether it is to be an international community; or, ultimately, a nation in Israel and nothing else. Which of these attitudes shall prevail is the question to be solved by the next half century. Certainly Efroykin is much more cogent, and is nearer to some Zionist viewpoints than Opatoshu and Ravitch are to the general stream of thought, Zionist and non-Zionist, in America, which conceives of an American Jewish culture on more "religious" (however vaguely that word be interpreted) foundations than these two authors are prepared to accept. Yet it is a paradox that does us no credit that the much poorer Yiddish-speaking world has recently produced three books, among many others, by intellectuals who address themselves seriously to these problems, whereas our Jewish writing in English shows very little that is comparable. Indeed, one would do well to ponder not only the contents of these books, of which, as already indicated, the best-done and most important is by far Efroykin's, but also the relative riches of Yiddish writing in America even now when in decline, as over against our more pretentious poverty. An English-speaking intelligentsia to compare in Jewish knowledge and concern with these writers, and even their small audience, is as yet to be formed. We can hardly afford to wait much longer.

## Isaac Rosenberg: Poet

The Collected Poems of Isaac Rosenberg. Edited by Gordon Bottomley and Denys Harding. Schocken Books. 240 pp. $3.50.

*Reviewed by* David Daiches

Isaac Rosenberg, the English Jewish poet who was killed in the First World War before he was twenty-eight years old, is not as well known in this country as some of the other young poets who suffered the same fate. In England his reputation has been growing steadily since Gordon Bottomley first selected and edited his poems in 1922. The complete edition of 1937, edited by Gordon Bottomley and Denys Harding with a foreword by Siegfried Sassoon, accorded him full honors as an important English poet. The present American edition is apparently a reprint of this.

At the time of his death Rosenberg was only beginning to find himself as a poet, and thus what we have of his work is in more than one sense fragmentary. His early poems have a rich, almost lush, vocabulary and a startling sensuous violence: his problem was to learn to control his images and subtilize his rhythms without losing his characteristic strength and liveliness. It is interesting to trace the development of this control, to note the gradual shedding of images suggesting the overgrown romanticism of a poet like Beddoes in favor of a more astringent verse. Yet he never seems to have come under the influence of Hulme or Pound or the other preachers of a spare, sinewy verse who were active in London just before and at the beginning of the First World War. He was not moving towards anything reminiscent of "Prufrock" or even the controlled ironies of Wilfred Owen's war poetry. He had begun as a painter (under the kind and sometimes exasperating patronage of three Jewish ladies who provided for his training at the Slade School) and this perhaps accounts for his fiercely colorful imagery, so different from the pallid precision of the Imagists. If he had lived he would not have become just another poet in the Eliot group, but would have developed into a poet much more like some members of the Apocalypse group who emerged in England immediately before the Second World War. One can almost see in him something of Dylan Thomas.

The parallel with Thomas (inaccurate, of

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course, as all such parallels are bound to be) can be drawn not only on the basis of the violence and richness in the verse of both poets, but also with respect to their use of national and religious background. Thomas uses Welsh folklore and Christian symbols together and distills a strange magic by peppering both with Freud and surrounding the whole with a profound personal emotion. Rosenberg did something similar with his Jewish background. He drew on this background readily; he is in fact one of the few English Jewish poets whose poetry quite unmistakably owes much of its quality to Biblical and other Hebrew sources; but he uses this material in an original, mythopeic manner, casting his own ironies and modernities around it until it develops an atmosphere quite different from anything to be found in Hebrew literature. His verse-play *Moses,* Biblical in theme yet so un-Biblical in mood and imagery, effectively illustrates this point: a more obvious example is his poem "God," with its deliberately shocking point of view:

*In his malodorous brain what slugs and mire,*
*Lanthorned in his oblique eyes, guttering burned!*
*His body lodged a rat where men nursed souls.*
*The world flashed grape-green eyes of a foiled cat*
*To him.*

Rosenberg carried his strong, sensuous imagery into his war poetry, to produce a few fully realized poems (such as the well-known "Break of Day in the Trenches") which project the individual experience with a combination of violence and precision. His rhythms are subtler now, his imagery less congested, an almost conversational idiom has come to temper the poetic surge:

*The darkness crumbles away—*
*It is the same old druid Time as ever.*
*Only a live thing leaps my hand—*
*A queer sardonic rat—*
*As I pull the parapet's poppy*
*To stick behind my ear.*
*Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew*
*Your cosmopolitan sympathies. . . .*

The grotesque violence of "Louse Hunting" well illustrates the combination of movement with pictorial quality that is to be found in his war poems:

*Then we all sprang up and stript*
*To hunt the verminous brood.*
*Soon like a demons' pantomime*
*The place was raging.*
*See the silhouettes agape,*
*See the gibbering shadows*
*Mixed with the battled arms on the wall.*
*See gargantuan hooked fingers*
*Pluck in supreme flesh*
*To smutch supreme littleness.*
*See the merry limbs in hot Highland fling*
*Because some wizard vermin*
*Charmed from the quiet this revel*
*When our ears were half lulled*
*By the dark music*
*Blown from Sleep's trumpet.*

Yet he had not abandoned, even when at the front, the rich romanticism of his earlier work. At the time of his death he was working on "The Unicorn," a verse play which he described as "a kind of 'Rape of the Sabine Women' idea: some strange race of wanderers have settled in some wild place and are perishing out for lack of women. The prince of these explores some country near where the women are most fair. But the natives will not hear of foreign marriages; and he plots another Rape of the Sabines, but is trapped in the act." This is Rosenberg's "Waste Land," but so different from Eliot's! What we possess of it are only drafts and fragments, including a lament at the prospect of extinction which sounds the "Waste Land" note quite explicitly, and in a wholly original manner, and the first tentative revision of a preliminary draft. The latter contains some fine passages, of which one might be cited as characteristic of this side of his maturer talent:

*Behind impassable places*
*Whose air was never warmed by a woman's lips*
*Bestial man shapes ride dark impulses*
*Through roots in the bleak blood, then hide*
*In shuddering light from their self loathing.*
*They fade in arid light—*
*Beings unnatured by their craving, for they know*
*Obliteration's spectre. They are few.*
*They wail their souls for continuity,*
*And bow their heads and knock their breasts before*
*The many mummies whose wail in dust is more*
*Than these who cry, their brothers who loiter yet.*
*Great beasts' and small beasts' eyes have place*

*As eyes of women to their hopeless eyes*
*That hunt in bleakness for the dread night,*
*The incarnate female soul of generation.*

This speech (spoken by the prince of the womanless land) is part of the preliminary revision which Rosenberg sent to Gordon Bottomley from France: before Bottomley had time to acknowledge its receipt, Rosenberg had been killed, leaving a collection of fragments full of excitement and promise. Had Rosenberg lived to develop further along the lines on which he had already moved, he might have changed the course of modern English poetry, producing side by side with the poetry of Eliot and his school a richer and more monumental kind of verse, opposing a new romantic poetry to the new metaphysical brand. But it is futile to speculate on the might-have-beens of history. Here are the poems, remarkable enough though incomplete, and, even as they are, a significant contribution to English poetry.

## Fruits of Scholarship

THE JEWS: THEIR HISTORY, CULTURE AND RELIGION. Edited by LOUIS FINKELSTEIN. New York, Harper. 2 Volumes. xxiii-1431 pp. $12.00.

*Reviewed by* MILTON HIMMELFARB

IN HIS prefatory letter to the Honorary President of the American Jewish Committee, which provided funds for these volumes, Dr. Finkelstein describes the contents and character of *The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion:* "This book is the first comprehensive description of Judaism and the Jews. While avoiding the anatomical structure and purely alphabetical organization of an encyclopedia, it is designed as a readable and unified sketch of a singular human phenomenon. The principal relevant facts concerning the people of Israel and its faith are summarized in a succession of essays, which form an ordered whole and afford penetrating glimpses into particular aspects of the subject. This book includes the first compact history of the Jews written by scholars specializing in the several fields; an appreciation of the rule of Judaism in world culture, seen from a wide variety of disciplines and skills; an initial effort toward a demography of the Jews in America; and a brief outline of the Jewish religion." This is a fair statement (though it sweepingly and surprisingly disregards the two volumes of the Central Yiddish Culture Organization's *The Jewish People: Past and Present* that have appeared in recent years); and indeed the substance of the work goes some way toward meeting the promise with which it is introduced. Certainly, this work makes available to the general reader, often for the first time, the fruits of Jewish scholarship in many specialized fields.

The text consists of thirty-five chapters, distributed among the four divisions Dr. Finkelstein lists. In the historical category, three chapters are outstanding in excellence. These are "The Biblical Period," by W. F. Albright (who seems to be the only Christian contributor); "The Historical Foundations of Postbiblical Judaism," by E. J. Bickerman; and "The Period of the Talmud," by Judah Goldin. Professor Albright's work is well known not only to scholars but also to the lay public; his chapter here is as good as anything he has ever written. Dr. Bickerman's treatment of the difficult period from 400 to 150 BCE combines erudition and thoughtfulness in a manner that must move every reader to respectful admiration; it is even better than his book, *The Maccabees*—more solid, more complex, and more subtle. In Professor Goldin's chapter on the twelve centuries of the Talmudic period it is hard to single out which is the more impressive, the feat of condensation or the lucid

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As the history comes closer in time and space, the quality lessens. Cecil Roth's two chapters, "The European Age in Jewish History (to 1648)" and "The Jews of Western Europe (from 1648)" are still very good, and he could not have made much better use of the thirty-five pages he was allowed for each. But the presence of Arieh Tartakower's "The Problem of European Jewry (1939-1945)" is bewildering; it is dated, representing the stock-taking and speculation that were common at the end of the war, and to retain it in a book published in 1950 was a mistake. With "The American Jewish Chronicle," by Anita Libman Lebeson, we touch bottom in the historical section. It is arch, breathless, and trite, unworthy of appearing in a book that starts with Albright, Bickerman, and Goldin. Moshe Davis's "Jewish Religious Life and Institutions in America," however, is meritorious, with a base in solid scholarship and original research; but it has marked bias for right-wing Conservative Judaism, and better editing would have suggested a redistribution of emphasis among the parts and the clarification of a number of statements that are only allusive as they stand now.

THE catch-all section on the role of Judaism in civilization, including twenty-nine chapters and covering almost seven hundred pages, is the longest. It could readily be subdivided into three further categories: Jewish cultural achievements; the contributions of Judaism and of Jewry in given historical situations (in contrast to individual persons who by coincidence were Jews) to general culture; and Jewish communal affairs. Under Jewish culture we may list Robert Gordis's "The Bible as a Cultural Monument"; Shalom Spiegel's "On Medieval Hebrew Poetry"; Hillel Bavli's "The Modern Renaissance of Hebrew Literature"; Abraham J. Heschel's "The Mystical Element in Judaism"; Ralph Marcus's "Hellenistic Jewish Literature"; Abraham S. Halkin's "Judeo-Arabic Literature"; Walter J. Fischel's "Israel in Iran"; Yudel Mark's "Yiddish Literature"; and Rachel Wischnitzer's "Judaism and Art." The chapters on the Jewish influence on world culture would include "The Influence of Jewish Law on the Development of the Common Law," by Jacob J. Rabinowitz; "Judaism and World Philosophy," by Alexander Altmann; "The Contribution of Judaism to World Ethics," by Mordecai M. Kaplan; "The Jewish Contribution to Music," by Eric Werner; "The Contributions of the Jews to Medicine," by Arturo Castiglioni; "Science and Judaism," by Charles Singer; "Judaism and the Democratic Ideal," by Milton R. Konvitz; "The Influence of the Bible on English Literature," by David Daiches; and "The Influence of the Bible on European Literature," by Frederick Lehner. Jewish communal matters would include Israel S. Chipkin's "Judaism and Social Welfare," Julius B. Maller's "The Role of Education in Jewish History," and Simon Greenberg's "Jewish Educational Institutions."

The best chapters dealing with Jewish culture as such are those on Hellenistic Jewish literature, Judeo-Arabic literature, and art. The piece on the Bible as a cultural monument is diffuse, and reads at times almost like a testimonial statement. In comparison with Gershom Scholem's article on mysticism in *The Jewish People: Past and Present,* the corresponding chapter in the present work is disappointing. The account of Iranian Jewish literature deals with a subject so special and so removed from the main currents of Jewish life and thought that we must attribute its presence to the accident of the author's availability, not to its intrinsic importance. The brief history of Yiddish literature is better for the early than for the modern period, and the discussions of medieval Hebrew poetry and modern Hebrew literature are too uncritical.

Most experienced readers tend to shy away from proofs of "the Jewish contribution to civilization," having come to expect a kind of naive vulgarity that typically seeks either to find the chapter and verse of an ancient Jewish source that may be the direct origin of a clause in the Declaration of Independence, or to establish that the grandmother of somebody important was Jewish. To write well about Jewish contributions is unusual because it is difficult, and it is difficult because a proper notion of contributions requires of the writer learning, honesty, and sensitivity in an exceptional measure. The high average level of all the chapters in the section on Jewish contributions is therefore particularly to be praised. The best are Jacob Rabinowitz on the common law, Alexander Altmann on philosophy, Eric Werner on music, Arturo Castiglioni on medicine, Charles Singer on science, and David Daiches on the Bible and English literature.

Of the three chapters on communal matters, only Simon Greenberg's "Jewish Educational Institutions" is fair. "The Role of Jewish Education in History" is an extreme example of the solemn foolishness that unkind critics attribute to professors of education.

The third section, on the sociology and demography of the Jews, includes the following chapters: "Who Are the Jews?" by Melville J. Herskovits; "Sources of Jewish Statistics," by U. Z. Engelman; "Jewish Migrations, 1840-1946," by Jacob Lestchinsky; "The Economic Structure of Modern Jewry," by Nathan Reich; and "The [American] Jewish Community," by Samuel C. Kohs. All five authors have done a solid, workman-like job. The final section, on the Jewish religion, consists of one chapter—Dr. Finkelstein's "The Jewish Religion: Its Beliefs and Practices," a revised version of something he wrote previously. It has an engaging simplicity, warmth, and high-mindedness.

In his introduction, Dr. Finkelstein expresses the hope that a second edition will include chapters on major subjects that the exigencies of time and the disordered state of the world caused to be missing from the first. These are a history of the Jews in Moslem lands, the cultural life of the Jews in Eastern Europe in recent centuries, the Jewish influence on mathematics and astronomy, the cultural life of the Jews in the Middle Ages, Ladino literature, and the development of the Palestinian Jewish community into the State of Israel. The absence of a history of East European Jewry (political, economic, and communal, as well as cultural) and of Zionism from the edition before us is especially striking.

It would be desirable for the second edition to show other improvements as well. The editors should watch the proofreading, introduce greater consistency in the technical apparatuses of the various chapters, help some of the contributors with their style and presentation, and completely rework or discard the few painfully inferior chapters and those that are already outdated. They might consider, too, the inclusion of an article on the relations between Jewish law and Greek and Roman law.

A book with these additions and modifications will be even more effective in accomplishing the purpose of the editor and the sponsors —"to dispel widespread misinformation, and to provide authentic information."

## Humanity and the Law

Courts on Trial: Myth and Reality in American Justice. By Jerome Frank. Princeton University Press. 441 pp. $5.00.

*Reviewed by* Milton R. Konvitz

When, twenty years ago, Jerome Frank published his *Law and the Modern Mind,* its author took his place as our leading legal critic—a position from which he has not been dislodged. Friends and enemies alike have constantly had to take note of him and to justify themselves by or against him. His first book is now in its sixth printing; and if it is ever out of print that will be only because it will have been displaced by *Courts on Trial,* a fuller and more balanced statement of Frank's views.

When *Law and the Modern Mind* was published, Frank was a practicing lawyer; since then his career has been greatly enriched by his experiences as counsel for federal agencies, chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Judge of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals, and author of another book of legal criticism (*If Men Were Angels,* 1942) and of two books dealing with public affairs and philosophical themes (*Save America First,* 1938, and *Fate and Freedom,* 1945). His latest book is, in my judgment, his best, and will confirm and enhance his reputation as scholar, man of humane letters, and legal philosopher and critic.

High public positions have not conventionalized Judge Frank's spirit; nor have the years slowed his intellectual speed to the point where we could say that his mind, though still powerful, is now tame. As one reads *Courts on Trial* one feels that the author's thoughts came faster than he could write them: there is a breathlessness in pace, a tumultuousness in flow that cannot ever be overtaken by verbal expression. Who but Jerome Frank would, in a work of documented scholarship, venture to cite private letters received by the author as well as conversations the author has had with colleagues, or could quote Aristotle, Pascal, Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill, and Mr. Justice Holmes—in a paragraph of nine lines?

Judge Frank's torrential flow and overflow of ideas and images, analogies and metaphors, citations and quotations, is in part to be explained by his unqualified integrity of purpose and honesty of mind. Having undertaken to speak, he is impelled to say all that he knows and thinks, and to use his words in such a way that nothing will be hidden or kept back—he is anxious to tell the reader exactly what he has in mind. Yet despite or because of the wealth of things he presents to the reader, one feels that Jerome Frank keeps back more than he expresses, only because he cannot write down his thoughts and feelings, with all their fine nuances, fast enough. This quality of Jerome Frank's mind and style will always puzzle, fascinate, exasperate, and excite readers of his books.

INTEGRITY of purpose and honesty of mind are also the fundamental standard by which he evaluates American law or courthouse government. In the administration of justice, Frank wants to see theory and practice confirm each other and conform one with the other; he wants image to reflect reality; he wants to see an end brought to all false show, myth, and sham. His position may be symbolized by his recall of the image of the late great Judge Julian Mack, who refused to wear a robe when presiding at trials, and who frequently conducted trials in his private chambers, where he sat at his desk and talked with parties, witnesses, and lawyers as man to man and not as god to man—practices which Frank wants to see followed.

This impulsion to unqualified honesty Frank correctly connects with fundamental premises of democracy, for in a democracy, he says, "the courts belong not to the judges and the lawyers, but to the citizens." Citizens should, therefore, be able to see the realities of judicial administration by merely looking at them; what appears to the citizen to be the reality *should* be the reality; and if it is not, then the appearance should be changed until appearance and reality become one.

Courthouse government appears to be impersonal and guided almost exclusively by fixed general laws; it gives the impression of being a science of legal prediction; judges claim to follow judicial precedents, and they claim that they or juries "find" the real facts in cases presented to them. But the reality, says Frank, is quite different. The administration of justice, he says, is full of chance or contingency; it is not a science but an art; the facts of a case are not the facts of the event as it actually happened, but only what the judge or jury thinks happened—the facts of a case are not found but made; legal rights are dependent upon guesses about what the courthouse officials will choose to say are the facts and the rules; individualization of justice is the rule, rather than the exception; rules are molded to fit facts, and they never settle disputes except in the relatively few cases in which the facts or the rules are not disputed.

How would Frank make the appearance reflect the reality? In the first place, he would like to see the public become more intimately acquainted with the events that happen in our courts, especially the trial courts. He would like to see legal education radically changed, so that the student will spend less time on books and observe more of what goes on in law offices and courtrooms. He would like to see judges trained especially for places on the judicial bench, particularly if they will sit in trial courts.

In addition Judge Frank would make some institutional changes. He would abolish the jury, except in major criminal trials. Some things can be done to make it more likely that the facts of a case are brought to the attention of the court, such as making provision for the investigation of cases at public expense, whether the cases be civil or criminal; impartial experts should be called by courts; psychologists should be invited to testify as to the reliability of witnesses. Juries should bring in special (fact-finding) verdicts rather than general (guilty or not guilty, for plaintiff or for defendant) verdicts. The individualization of justice should be practiced openly, and not, as is now being done, surreptitiously. Judges should be required to make special fact-findings. Talking movies of trials might be taken for use on appeals. There should be research in the social effects of legal rules.

JUDGE FRANK does not claim that these and other reforms would make our administration of justice perfect; he claims only that they would remove some evils and would improve the system generally. Administration of justice will always remain an art and will never achieve the status of a science. Courthouse government is concerned with practical actions of men, and practical activity, as John Dewey says in *The Quest for Certainty*, "deals with individualized and unique situations which are never exactly duplicable and about which, accordingly, no complete assurance is possible." But Judge Frank is no legal nihilist. He would not throw out the doctrine of *stare decisis* (precedent) altogether. Like Dewey, Frank would use the precedents and institutions of the past instrumentally, always subjecting them to intelligent examination and re-examination with an eye on the consequences that follow.

Many of the trial-court reforms suggested by Judge Frank could be instituted by the unilateral action of a courageous, pioneering trial judge—as was done by Julian Mack. A beginning must be made somewhere and by someone. To defer experimentation until we have judges who have been more rigorously trained and disciplined for judgeship means putting *Courts on Trial* out of sight and mind for generations to come. It is, in a way, a great pity that F. D. Roosevelt thought so well of Jerome Frank that he decided to make him a judge of the Circuit Court of Appeals. He should have estimated him a little higher and given him the "lower post" of a District Court judge. Then Jerome Frank would have had to act at his peril, and *Courts on Trial* would be the report of a tried experiment, rather than a blueprint for a future that we may never see.

But even if we should not live to see Jerome Frank's reforms in courthouse government instituted, there is no need to despair. There is always the consolation that though men die, ideas live on—and have consequences.

## Introducing the Book of Books

PREFACE TO SCRIPTURE. By SOLOMON B. FREEHOF. Union of American Hebrew Congregations. 372 pp. $3.00.

*Reviewed by* ALFRED JOSPE

A REMARKABLE number of books on the Bible have been published in recent years. Many of them seem motivated not only by the scholar's desire to summarize the latest results of Biblical research but by a profound concern for the overcoming of the intellectual and emotional alienation that separates modern man from the Book of Books. Dr. Freehof's volume, part of a series of popular commentaries to the American-English versions of the Hebrew Bible which is projected by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, is in this trend. It does not approach the Bible merely as a literary monument of the past but attempts to make it relevant to contemporary experience. Therefore Dr. Freehof addresses himself primarily to the modern reader who must be "won again to a conviction of the worth-whileness of the enterprise of reading the Bible regularly."

Dr. Freehof has the rare ability to be popular without sacrificing depth. His book is easily readable without being shallow, critical yet reverent, liberal without surrendering a warm religiosity. *Preface to Scripture* consists of two parts. In the first, Dr. Freehof portrays the role which the Bible has played as the most continuous and extensive cultural and literary influence in the history of man. He analyzes its origin, growth, and structure, describes the techniques used by the Masoretes to safeguard the integrity of the Biblical text, traces the introduction of the Bible into the services of the synagogue, and delineates the historical and literary processes which led to the development of Midrash, Mishnah, and Talmud. He explores the philosophy and mood of Scripture, clarifies its style, and focuses the reader's attention on the dominant thoughts conveyed in the various parts of the Bible.

The second part provides a general descriptive introduction to each Biblical book, followed by a synopsis of important textual portions and a commentary designed to explain unusual phrases and relate them to their historical context.

One can differ with some of Dr. Freehof's formulations without detracting from the exceptional quality of his book. Thus he expresses the frequently heard theory that the Biblical God-concept is presented not on the purely philosophical level but in vivid popular terms because the prophets had to speak the language of the masses in their attempt to teach the difficult idea of the one universal God to every human being. However, the Bible seems to be non-philosophical not merely in its language but in its thinking, and the absence of abstract terminology is not simply an educational device but is caused by the absence of abstract thinking itself. The prophetic knowledge of God is not a product of metaphysical speculations but originated in the immediacy of religious experience. Biblical thought is reflective, not speculative; it seeks to grasp the meaning of human and cosmic phenomena but does not integrate its insights in a philosophical system.

Dr. Freehof's analysis of the origin and growth of the Oral Law is valid but seems slanted. The rabbinical theory that Jewish law was derived not only from the visible text of the

Bible but from an oral tradition as well was not simply a matter of "belief"; the existence of an oral tradition even in Biblical times seems well established. It would also have been helpful if Dr. Freehof had been more specific in the crucial chapter on "The Bible and the Modern Reader," in which he analyzes the resistance of many modern Jews to the Bible. The non-religionist can hardly be satisfied with an assertion that there is no sound reason why modern man should refuse to believe in God. It is true that the scientist operates on the assumption that there is law and order in nature. But the step from the recognition of a principle of order in the cosmos to the acceptance of a personal God who controls the destinies of man and nature involves an affirmation that would have deserved the same patient and cogent analysis which Dr. Freehof gave to other problems.

While such reservations cannot mar one's appreciation of this book, it is questionable whether a book on the Bible can strike sparks of religiosity in those who have discarded it as antiquated ballast. But anyone who wants to understand the Hebrew Bible, or wants to understand it better, will find Dr. Freehof's book an exceptionally competent and informative guide.

## Lest We Forget

AMERICANS BETRAYED. By MORTON GRODZINS. University of Chicago Press. 445 pp. $5.00.

REMOVAL AND RETURN. By LEONARD BLOOM and RUTH RIEMER. University of California Press. 259 pp. $3.75.

*Reviewed by* HERBERT B. EHRMANN

THESE two books constitute complementary studies of the uprooting of the Japanese population on the West Coast during World War II. The approach in each is scholarly, unemotional, and statistical. This is noteworthy, because the authors deal with our most serious lapse from democratic principles since slavery was sanctioned.

Without evidence of disloyalty, without hearings, and without any pretense of individual guilt, the West Coast Japanese were torn away from their homes and occupations. Citizens and aliens alike were exiled *en masse* by order of the Army. So little preparation was afforded them that in most instances their property was sacrificed or lost. Most inadequate provision was made for storage and protection. To find a modern analogy to the procedures pursued by our own government one would have to study the crimes of the Nazi and Russian dictatorships.

The analogy, however, is far from complete. Ours was a temporary lapse. With the ending of the war, the Japanese, nearly destitute of property and bruised in spirit, were liberated from their camps. Most of them have found their way back to the West Coast. Congress has penitently passed a law intended to make some restitution for their losses. As pointed out in *Removal and Return,* however, this law is not capable of offering real compensation. It has unreasonably low limits, it throws the burden of proof on humble people who had been given little opportunity to list or follow their property, and it makes no provision whatever for loss of earnings. We may hope that the statistical tables and graphs in *Removal and Return* will be used to improve the legislation.

Nevertheless, the law, even if inadequate, is a token of our sense of guilt. The enduring damage in our crime against the Japanese was the harm which we did to ourselves. We find it impossible to regard the financial and mental sufferings of our West Coast Japanese as merely another casualty of war. We must live with the thought that in a crisis we denied some of the most fundamental articles of our democratic faith.

IN HIS aptly entitled book, *Americans Betrayed,* Mr. Grodzins attempts scientifically to evaluate the various factors which led us along this path. It is a most important task. Indeed, if we are to salvage anything from the unholy wreckage of our democratic professions, it must be by an understanding of what brought about our fall.

Oddly enough, danger to security—the one possible justification for our scrapping the bill of rights—did not exist. *Americans Betrayed* makes it abundantly clear that there was no factual evidence whatsoever that our Japanese, as a group, presented any real threat to the safety of the West Coast. Shortly after Pearl Harbor, the Department of Justice had moved swiftly against individual persons suspected of disloyalty and had arrested over twelve hundred suspect Japanese aliens on the Pacific Coast. Satisfied with the safety measures it had taken, it consistently opposed proposals to evacuate the entire Japanese population. The War Department, however, pressed for evacuation. In its "Final Report" on the subject, justifying its recommendations, the War Department cited three specific incidents of alleged giving of information to the enemy. The first alleged incident occurred after the recommendation for mass evacuation was made and could not have been a reason for it; the other two happened after mass evacuation was complete. The irrationality of inflamed prejudice could not be better illustrated. The total absence of acts of disloyalty was cited as ominous evidence of lurking disloyalty. Even the fact that our Japanese *did not* celebrate the Japanese Emperor's birthday was reported as indicative of guilt. The hollowness of the "military necessity" excuse for the deed is shown by the fact that in Hawaii, far more exposed than the Pacific Coast to attack, and containing a much higher proportion of Japanese, no mass evacuation was regarded as necessary to protect the area.

Mr. Grodzins concludes that the disgraceful business was due to an organized pre-existing racial prejudice, to economic cupidity, and to political fortune-hunting intertwined with patriotism. Military disaster had produced fear, frustration, and a desire to find a scapegoat. This is a malevolent combination. It is also reminiscent. In Mr. Justice Murphy's words, it bore a "melancholy resemblance" to the treatment accorded Jews in Nazi Germany. Indeed, it resembles all the mass persecutions in history.

Where was the aroused opposition of an indignant public that we must count upon in free America to prevent such tragic episodes? Under despotic governments, public indignation can be forcibly suppressed, forestalled by lies, or thwarted by secrecy, but here the public had no such excuse for abdicating its responsibility.

The sad story is that public opposition to the mass evacuation was feeble indeed. Some church groups and labor unions, Japanese organizations, the American Civil Liberties Union, and a few individuals were opposed to the torrent of super-patriotism and fear. The Justice Department–War Department conflict was never publicly aired. The executive order which so fundamentally touched civil rights and affected the lives of many thousands of human beings was approved by the Bureau of the Budget on the day it was presented and signed by the President shortly thereafter. It was never discussed at a Cabinet meeting. After the order had been signed and the evacuation begun, there was a general feeling that the military were responsible for winning the war and that the reasons for their actions should not be too closely scrutinized. This was apparently also the basis for the Supreme Court's majority opinion upholding the constitutionality of the order. Again we meet a familiar pattern. Miscarriages of justice in a democracy rarely occur without a blind confidence misplaced in the responsible "authority."

It is easy now to criticize the public indifference that permitted this wholesale persecution in our own country. All of us, however, shared in the sin. This reviewer well remembers the fairly typical reaction to the affair—why worry about a few thousand Japanese when millions of our own youth were being prepared to face death overseas? Public indignation which might otherwise have prevented the evacuation was deflected by this absorption in national anxiety and fear. And yet, if freedom is to survive, its followers must increase, and not diminish, their vigilance in times of crisis.

The authors of these books have performed a real service. Awareness of past mistakes is a precondition for the prevention of future lapses. Books like these are an invaluable part of an American education, now slowly turning from its former emphasis on the liberal arts and from training to earn a livelihood, toward a new accent upon creating men and women capable of expanding the democratic life.

## Book Reviewers in this Issue

Arthur Hertzberg is rabbi of the West End Synagogue in Nashville, Tennessee.

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Milton Himmelfarb's articles and reviews have appeared in previous issues of Commentary.

Milton R. Konvitz is professor of Industrial and Labor Relations at the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations of Cornell University.

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